



# ARABIAN PEAK AND DESERT

	7312
	G. 4.
Book No.	16

*By the same Author*

## AROUND THE COASTS OF ARABIA

*New Statesman*: "Mr. Rihani has a lively style and considerable descriptive power . . . excellent reading alike for the serious student of politics and sociology and for the mere lover of travel stories . . . princes and poets and pearl-fishers, soldiers and slavers, native and foreign officials."

*Foreign Affairs*: "A very entertaining book, written by an authority on Arabian folklore."

*Daily News*: "The author's knowledge of the Arab and his customs is both intimate and critical . . . the most remarkable chapter in this interesting book is one which deals with the slave trade in Arabia."

## IBN SA'OU'D OF ARABIA

(Out of print)

✱

■





THE IMAM OF THE ZAIDIS AND THE RULER OF THE YAMAN

# ARABIAN PEAK AND DESERT

TRAVELS IN AL-YAMAN

*by*

AMEEN RIHANI

LONDON  
CONSTABLE & CO LTD  
1930

PUBLISHED BY  
*Constable & Company Limited*  
*London W.C. 2*

BOMBAY  
CALCUTTA MADRAS

*Oxford University*  
*Press*

TORONTO  
*The Macmillan Company*  
*of Canada, Limited*

Acc. No.	9312
Class No.	G. 4.
Book No.	

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AN OVERTURE OF SCARES . . . . .	I
II. A LITTLE JOURNEY . . . . .	7
III. THE OTHER RESIDENCY . . . . .	10
IV. ON THE ROAD TO SAN'A . . . . .	19
V. THE GHAT . . . . .	30
VI. THE VERDANT YAMAN . . . . .	43
VII. SAN'A . . . . .	75
VIII. THE IMAM YAHYA . . . . .	92
IX. THE CAPTIVE GUEST . . . . .	101
X. THE RULE OF THE IMAM . . . . .	107
XI. ARMS AND THE TAXES . . . . .	118
XII. SPIRITUAL TRAITS . . . . .	127
XIII. THE CLOUDS HAVE LIFTED . . . . .	136
XIV. FASTING AND FEASTING . . . . .	148
XV. THE HANDICRAFTS OF SAN'A . . . . .	167
XVI. ARCHITECTURE AND TREASURES . . . . .	175
XVII. THE GHETTO . . . . .	181
XVIII. THE ZILOUD . . . . .	189
XIX. ABOUT WOMEN AND THE WEATHER . . . . .	200
XX. ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS AND RHYMES . . . . .	206
XXI. MISSIONS AND SUSPICIONS . . . . .	215

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. THE IMAM AT WORK . . . . .	220
XXIII. THE GREAT POLITICAL PROBLEM . . . . .	228
XXIV. THE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED . . . . .	236
XXV. THE ROOF OF THE YAMAN . . . . .	242
XXVI. TO THE BORDER . . . . .	256
XXVII. THE WOMEN OF TIHAMAH . . . . .	267

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE IMAM OF THE ZAIDIS AND THE RULER OF THE YAMAN . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
A BEDOUIN OF THE YAMAN. . . . .	12
OUR ESCORT FROM DAKAISON . . . . .	} 22
MY HENCHMEN . . . . .	
HIMYARITE STATUETTE . . . . .	32
THE AMPHITHEATRE . . . . .	44
THE GOVERNOR OF IBB WITH AMEEN RIHANI, THE AUTHOR . . . . .	52
HIMYARITE STATUETTE . . . . .	60
ZIOUD WOMEN . . . . .	} 78
A GREAT ARAB EMIR . . . . .	
SAN'A, THE COURT AND FOUNTAIN OF THE HOUSE WE OCCUPIED . . . . .	82
A FAMILY AT SAN'A . . . . .	90
OUR ESCORT FROM IBB TO DHAMAR . . . . .	} 94
ZIOUD SOLDIERS RESTING . . . . .	
PORTERS WITH THEIR BURDENS . . . . .	} 102
THE HOME IN THE BOULDER . . . . .	
SAN'A, THE TREE OF JUSTICE . . . . .	104
THE SCRIBE . . . . .	} 110
THE STREET . . . . .	

	FACING PAGE
THE GATE OF THE CITY . . . . .	144
A CASTLE BY THE WAYSIDE . . . . .	
NOTABLES IN A CAFÉ . . . . .	154
THE HABITATION OF THE PIOUS . . . . .	
THE CITY IN THE HILLS . . . . .	162
"A BIG MAN ON A LITTLE STEED" . . . . .	
THE CITADEL . . . . .	170
A FORTIFIED VILLAGE IN THE YAMAN . . . . .	178
THE MINARET OF THE MOSQUE . . . . .	186
THE SCHOLARS . . . . .	196
WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE PLAIN . . . . .	
ON THE WAY FROM THE WELL . . . . .	204
A HOUSE OF THE BETTER SORT . . . . .	212
SAN'A, TYPICAL HOUSES OF THE HIGHEST CLASS . . . . .	224

## AL-YAMAN

**BOUNDARIES.**—To the west, from Luhaiyah down to Sheikh Said near Perim on the Red Sea ; to the south, the Protectorates north, west and east of Aden ; to the east, the Vacant Quarter ; and to the north, a line drawn from Luhaiyah up to Zaidiynh and thence through the hills of Khawlan and Beau Bishr to Najran, which is on the outskirts of the Vacant Quarter.

**DISTRICTS.**—Al-Yaman is divided, as in the days of the Turks, into Lewas, or Districts, and these are San'a, Heraz, Hudaidah, Ta'iz, and Sa'dah.

**POPULATION.**—About three million souls.

**AREA.**—About 50,000 square miles.

**ITS IMPORTANT TRIBES.**—Hashid, Bakil, Hamdan, Hawarithah, Zu Muhammad, Zu Husain, Benu Islam, Benu Matar, and Al-Makarimah.

**ITS IMPORTANT CITIES.**—San'a (the capital), Zamar, Yarim, Ibb, Ta'iz, Zabid, Hudaidah, Bait'ul-Faqih, Mokha and Manakhah.

**ITS SECTS.**—Zaidis (or as they call themselves, Zioud), Isma'ilis, Sunnis (mostly Shafi'is), and Jews.





# ARABIAN PEAK AND DESERT

## CHAPTER I

### AN OVERTURE OF SCARES

ONE day, at the office of an Arabic newspaper in New York, I met a man who spoke Arabic with a soft unfamiliar accent, and I was curious to know where he was from. His reply was more interesting than his speech. It was even surprising. For seldom does one see in the Syrian Colony of New York a man from the Yaman ; and as I was then on the eve of departure for Arabia, I availed myself of the opportunity of adding something to my little store of knowledge. ' Tell me about your country,' I said. ' Our country is fair in its water and air,' he replied. ' But its people are always fighting.'

' With whom do they fight ? '

' We fought the Turks, and we fought the tribes, and we fought the Idrisi, and we are always fighting among ourselves.'

' Does the Imam Yahya rule the entire Yaman ? '

' No, no. Only a part of it. We, the people of Al-Yaman, seldom submit to the rule of one man for a long time. We love liberty and we fight for it. We slay the nearest to us to remain free. We say to the Imam : " Such and such a one we desire not as governor " ; and if he does not remove him at once, we elect a sheikh in his place and say to him : " You are our governor and our Imam. " '

' And if the governor the people do not like refuses to surrender his post ? '

(*In the same smooth tone*) 'Wallah, they'll slay him.'

'Are there any foreigners in Al-Yaman?'

'No, no. The foreigners are not permitted to live in Al-Yaman.'

'Are they allowed to travel?'

'No, no.'

'And should a traveller come?'

'Wallah, we'll slay him.'

'Suppose he travels in disguise.'

'If we know him, wallah, we'll slay him.'

'Do you permit Syrians, who are Arabs like yourselves, to travel in your country?'

'If they are Christians, they and the foreigners are one in the eye of the people of Al-Yaman. Their speech alone might protect them.'

'And if a Christian traveller's identity is discovered?'

(*In the same unchanging mellifluous accent*) 'Wallah, we'll slay him.'

I left New York carrying with me an impression, not altogether pleasant, of this 'we'll-slay-him' Arab; and when in Cairo I said at the house of a friend that I was going to Al-Yaman, N. Shuqair, of the War Office, assured me that it was impossible. Which reminded me of the conversation at the office of the New York newspaper, and made the country of Wallah-We'll-Slay-Him darker and farther than ever. 'But why?' I asked of N. Shuqair, who was also an author and traveller. 'Is it not safe?' 'Impossible,' said he again, with finality, and then added what afforded a little assurance: 'The authorities will not permit you.'

'What authorities?'

'The English.'

'And have the English anything to do in Al-Yaman?'

'They are in Aden, at the gate, and they will not let you pass. They might permit you to go to Lahaj only. But what do you want in Al-Yaman? There is war there now, and the dangers of travel are many. More-

over——' He added nothing, and his silence was the more discouraging. He then asked me to dinner at his home, and I accepted on condition that he will not try to dissuade me from going to Al-Yaman. Impossible! That was the last word I heard him utter when that evening we said farewell—for the last time. Alas, he died two months later.

In Jeddah I met my old friend Constantine Yanni, who was then Director of the Air Force of the Hashemite Government, and it occurred to me that there would be no harm—what am I saying? I certainly felt the need—of having a travelling companion in what I then pictured, and not without reason, as the wilds of Al-Yaman and Asir. I asked King Husein, therefore, to permit Constantine to go with me. His Majesty kindly consented.

Depending upon Allah, Constantine and I crossed to Port Sudan, where we boarded a steamer for Aden and excited no little suspicion. For I wore an Arab head-dress and carried an American passport, while my companion in the uniform of Captain of the Hijaz Army, carried a passport of the Hashemite Government. Besides, the relations between the British Government and King Husein were strained in those days.

At Aden we were met by an officer, who asked to see our passports, and then kept them, saying: 'Orders, sir, to turn all passports to the General's Assistant for inspection. We'll send them to your hotel to-morrow.'

Fortunately, I had other documents to show at the Consulate; but when I told the Consul that I was going to visit the Imam Yahya at San'a, he exclaimed: 'Gee, that's tough. You'll get your head cut off.' He then gave me the latest news: battles between the Imam and the Idrisi—the roads are not safe—even the Imam's Mission to King Husein, returning from the Hijaz, could not proceed without a military escort, etc. Of what good then are my letters of introduction and all the recommendations that preceded and accompanied us?

But consuls, said I to myself, seldom do anything for you, even in times of peace ; and in Aden at that time we were still on one of the tattered fringes of the world war. Indeed, it is a consul's business, especially in the East, to discourage travellers always and, while taxing them madly, make them wish that they were back in 'the Old Town' again. One of them wrote a doggerel entitled, 'What did God Make Consuls for,' and he answers by saying :

'To bleed you, not heed you,  
And at all times to mislead you—  
That's what God made consuls for.'

But Consul Cross, after whistling his surprise and giving his warning, was kind enough to write to the Resident, Military and Political, General T. E. Scott, to make an appointment for me. The Resident, however, was in no more haste about replying than he was about returning our passports. Which angered Cross and pleased me ; for he was spurred to a more active interest in the matter.

Meanwhile, I learned that the order to return *all* passports to the General's Assistant for inspection applied only to me and my companion. Someone, it seems, was unduly solicitous about our safety, and the Residency, heeding the cables received, would not, for our sake, act in haste. But Consul Cross himself was getting impatient, and he made an appointment for me with the First Assistant Resident, who then took us into the office of his Chief.

Major Reilly, the First Assistant, beamed with the geniality and sympathetic charm of his race ; and General Scott, who is also, I was told, and Irishman—perhaps from Ulster—was amiably negative. The British official, unlike the American, does not meet you, before he asks you to sit down, with a slap-bang question about your business. He has learned from the Oriental the art of the overture ; and in the Orient there is always time enough for it.

General Scott opened the conversation with a reference to poetry. 'I am told you are a poet.' To which I replied: 'You are this time rightly informed.' He smiled and asked me about the Arab poet—the forerunner of Omar Khaiyam—whom I have translated into English. I helped him to pronounce the name of Abu'l-Ala and said a word, answering his question, about the difference between him and Omar. Abu'l-Ala is pre-eminently intellectual, Omar is pre-eminently sensuous; but both arrive at the same conclusion—Doubt.

'And poets like adventure,' said the General, changing the path, but not the direction, of the conversation. 'The world everywhere,' I replied, 'is getting too tame for adventure. The field of adventure is overrun by the motor car.' 'It is not so in the Yaman.' 'I am glad.' 'But there are dangers.' 'One of the pleasures of travel.' 'There are real dangers in the Yaman for Christian travellers. We can give you a permit to go to Lahaj and thence to the frontier. Beyond that you will proceed on your own risk. We cannot protect you.'

'Nor can my Consul,' I said. 'He, too, like Pilate, washes his hands. I am, nevertheless, going to San'a on my own risk. I have no political designs, I assure you, and no connections with any Government. But I like the Arabs—I think I have in me something of their blood—and in my travels I like to be of service to them. If I am convinced, from what I shall see, that they are in need of your assistance, British assistance, I shall advise them accordingly. I make this statement before you and Consul Cross. The American Government has no interest in Arabia. If I can be of service to England, therefore, in what I believe to be beneficial to the Arabs, I shall be glad. And I shall serve you gratis. All I ask is permission to go to San'a.'

'But the road is not safe,' reiterated the General, 'especially for Christian travellers. If we permit you to go beyond the frontier, therefore, it will be at your own

risk—we may not assume any responsibility, etc.’ ‘Do you wish me to write you a waver for that?’ General Scott smiled as he rose from his chair, promising to consider the matter and write me soon about it.

‘It seems,’ said Consul Cross, as we walked out of the Residency, ‘that the General knows something about you.’ So did Aden for that matter. But not the sort of knowledge, though it should amuse, that a traveller deems necessary for his health and progress.

He is, said Aden, the political emissary of King Husein to the Imam. Yahya. The proof? His travelling companion, who is an officer in the Hijaz Army.

He is representing American companies and is going to San’a for concessions. The proof? The interest of the American Consul in his case.

He is the Agent of the Pan-Arab League travelling in Arabia to stir up the Arabs against the English. The proof? It was cabled to Aden ahead of us. Hence the interest they took in our passports, which they kept three days.

Hence, too, methinks, the overtures of the amiable General Scott and his more amiable Assistant about poetry and astronomy and other delectable irrelevancies.

## CHAPTER II

### A LITTLE JOURNEY

WHILE waiting for the General's decision and doing my best to think well of the English, it occurred to me to pay a visit to the Sultan of the little Kingdom of Lahaj, which is twenty miles from Aden by rail. I wrote a letter to His Highness, therefore, asking him if I may come. 'But you have to write to the Residency also,' said Consul Cross, 'and ask them for permission.' 'Why? Is the Sultan their prisoner?' 'I don't know what he is—I want to go with you to find out.'

A letter was then indited to the bland First Assistant, requesting him to permit us three, the Consul, Captain Yanni and myself, to make the little journey to Lahaj. But the Oriental monarch, strange to say, was quicker to respond than his English friends in Aden. He wrote on the very day he received my letter, welcoming me and my friends; and two days later Major Reilly sent Consul Cross an order permitting us to travel on a prescribed day to Lahaj. But the order was subsequently rescinded.

The Major forgot to ask how long we intended to stay there, for he had to write to the Sultan to get his consent before he could let us proceed. His consent? I translated to Consul Cross the letter of His Highness to me, and he told Reilly about it. I was sorry to have put the Major in such an awkward position. 'But the formalities,' he said, 'had to be observed.' And what are the formalities? Red tape? Intrigue? Suspicion? It was most likely the latter using the first and the second to its end—suspicion profiting by red tape and spending the profit.



I was surprised to find some of my Arab friends in the game. I was grieved. The Arab in Aden that speaks English and tells you that he knows the First or the Second Assistant or the punkah boy at the Residency, is not wholly to be trusted. 'Those who come to see you,' said Consul Cross, 'go afterwards to see Major Reilly.' They carry fuel to the fire of suspicion and confuse the First Assistant's mind, undermining even his blandness. Hence the rescinded order and the permits with a provision accompanying the following letter :

DEAR MR. CROSS :

I have had a reply from H. H. the Sultan of Lahaj, informing me that he will be glad to receive the visits of yourself and of Mr. Ameen Rihani and Mr. Constantine Yanni.

I enclose permits for the journey.

I shall be glad if you will kindly explain to Mr. Ameen Rihani and Mr. Constantine Yanni that a formal application for further permission should be made to me before they proceed beyond Lahaj.

The country beyond Lahaj is not safe for travellers without an escort, and arrangements for an escort should be made through this office.

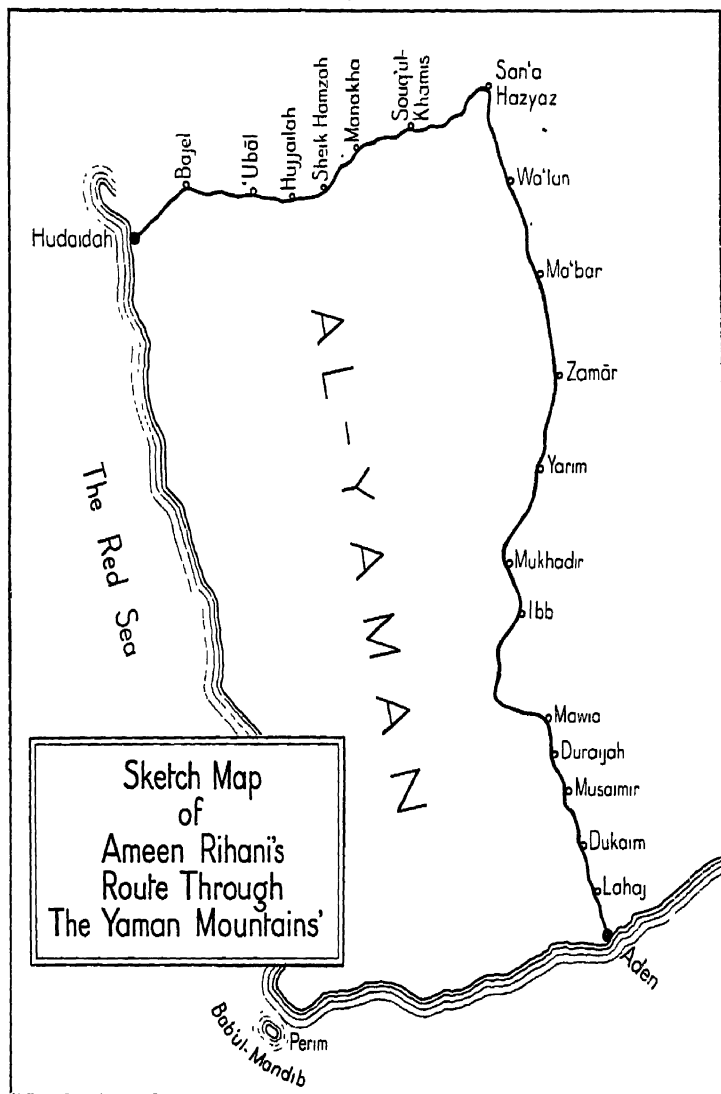
I hope you will have a pleasant trip.

Yours sincerely,

B. M. REILLY.

Evidently, the Residency thought that we had planned this little journey to Lahaj to defeat its purpose or to escape 'the formalities.' But would we go to San'a without permission and without an escort? Even though we had the temerity, the Residency would exert every political means to check it. It could not, unfortunately, use force to induce in us a better consideration for our own safety and well-being.

No, they would not let us make a step, the British authorities, without assuring themselves that it was safe for us to do so. They even did us the honour of having



Sketch Map  
of  
Ameen Rihani's  
Route Through  
The Yaman Mountains'



us shadowed in Aden. Indeed, their solicitude about our safety was unexampled. They are also most obliging to the Sultan of Lahaj ; for they spare him the trouble of issuing orders in his own little kingdom. In fact, they insist upon doing it themselves. ‘Arrangements for an escort should be made through this office.’

I wrote a letter, therefore, applying for permission to leave Lahaj and for an escort, although both were unnecessary, as I shall show in the following chapter ; and I packed up and left Aden on the afternoon of Saturday, April 1st.—But I did leave Aden, accompanied by Consul Cross, Captain Yanni, and some Arab friends, *who did not speak English.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE OTHER RESIDENCY

I HAVE to go back to Aden to finish my story.

Even as there are two Adens, one outside the Crater and another in it, there are also two important personages, two Residents—the Resident-General and the Resident-Qadi. The first represents the almightiness of Downing Street, the second reflects the sun of San'a.

The Qadi Abdullah'l-'Arashi, who then represented the Imam Yahya in Aden, sent a messenger to say that 'he is sitting on the carpet of patience, waiting for the sun of learning and wisdom to rise in his house.' The said 'sun,' therefore, got into a motor car, which enabled him in ten minutes to shine before the Yaman Residency in Aden Camp—Aden proper—which is in the mouth of the crater.

We walked up a dark stairway, at the top of which we were met by a little man in a white skull cap, a pair of sandals and a cotton tunic, whose sleeves allowed the blue sweater under it to timidly assert itself. It was His Worship the Qadi who took my hand in both of his and led me into the reception room and up to the low diwan in the corner. There were other people present, as the sandals at the door indicated ; but aside from getting up when we entered and resuming their seats when we sat down, they did not appear to be dazzled by 'the sun of learning and wisdom.'

The Qadi Abdullah opened the conversation with a reference to the cable we had sent him from Port Sudan,

and a magazine (Arabic) he had received on the same day containing an article on Ameen Rihani. ' *Mashallah!* A strange coincidence. I read about you, O Philosophe, and forthwith telegraphed to Mowlana in San'a. The reply will come, *inshallah*, in a few days, and you will proceed with a military escort. We are inexpressibly rejoiced at the visit of the Philosophe to our barbarous land, and we shall do our utmost to make your journey safe and comfortable. Mowlana the Imam is also a poet and philosophe, and he has many books in manuscript—the biggest library in all Arabia, which your eyes, *inshallah*, will behold.'

The Qadi himself is a scholar, and he tries to keep abreast of the times. Among the Cairo newspapers on his diwan, I saw one which had come all the way from New York to shock his worship's fine literary sense. 'America is, of a certainty, mother of the marvellous. But this,' pointing to the New York daily, 'is not one of her children. They do not write good Arabic in America, they make many mistakes in diction, even in grammar. And the manner of expression is often barbarous. . . . They are very rich the children of the Arabs in America, are they not? Credit to them that they have time to write in the journals.' When I told him that an advertisement in the newspaper he receives is paid for at the rate of an English pound a square inch for one month, he opened wide his eyes; and after examining carefully its eight pages, he said: 'Of a certainty, mother of the marvellous is America.'

On the following day a car stopped before the hotel, and then proceeded towards the British Residency. A moment later a man came up to say that the Qadi will soon perfume my apartment with his presence. There was reality in the metaphor. For half an hour later, after he had visited His Excellency or the Assistant of Excellency, my companion Constantine, who was watching in the balcony, announced his return. 'He is coming in his

official dress,' said Constantine. I covered my head, therefore, with the *sumadah* and *ighal* and hastened to meet him in the corridor. A heavy Oriental perfume joined the slave in announcing him, and two other slaves walked behind him. I would not have known him, were it not for that.

For the cotton tunic and the skull cap were replaced or concealed by a sumptuousness of stuffs fit to grace an ambassador of the Image of Perfection and the Incarnation of the Ancient Virtues, the Imam of San'a. Here, indeed, was the Yaman Resident in his official regalia, resplendent in a glamour of colours and redolent of ottar of roses and musk. His huge red and yellow turban was in harmony with the barred silk robe and the coloured fringes of a white mantle, which was thrown toga-like across the shoulder. The sparkling stones in the hilt of a dagger shone from his waist and a sword clattered at his side. But the blue sweater still peeped indiscreetly at the wrist. Otherwise, His Worship reminded me of no one so much as Chu Chin Chow in the play. The pomp, however, was neither in his voice nor in his manner—only in his costume.

I was overwhelmed in a glamour of perfume and colour; I swooned in an atmosphere of incomparable affability. Indeed, the Resident-Qadi was most gracious, and, unlike himself the day before, most vague. His speech was like his robes, beautifully official. He did not say that he had paid a visit to his distinguished contemporary the British Resident. But they had been whispering in my ear, my English-speaking Arab friends, that the Qadi Abdullah 'l-'Arashi is the first cousin of the Shaitan—a very uncertain one, a hypocrite, and a mercenary. He is also in the pay of the British! He serves his Master the Imam of San'a, but the British in Aden foot the bill. They pay him Sixty Pounds Sterling a month. They also gave him a motor car—and a valuable present when he recently took unto himself a wife.



A BEDOUIN OF THE YAMAN.

To face page 12.





A day later, after this official visit, I went to see him again at the Residency. He was in his skull cap and cotton tunic, and his words were most assuring. He had not yet received from the Imam a reply to his telegram : ' But the roads are safe, O perfect One, and if they are not, we will make them safe for thy sake, *inshallah*. As soon as the reply comes, you will proceed. And if you do not like to wait for the reply of the Imam, O Philosophe, we can arrange immediately for your departure. We are seldom honoured with the visit of so excellent an incarnation of the human perfections.' (The Qadi and King Husein must have drank at the same fountain of eloquence.)

I decided to leave immediately and arranged for the little journey to Lahaj. But my English-speaking Arab friends, as set down in the preceding chapter, spoiled the plot ; and then they came to me with infernal whisperings. ' If the English are suspicious and don't want to let you go to Al-Yaman, they won't say so. They won't do anything direct for the sake of your Consul. But they can get the scoundrel 'Arashi to refuse to let you go on the pretext that the roads are not safe. Five Pounds will do it. Beware ! ' All of which passed my comprehension. The British are not capable of such Oriental villainy—will not condescend to it.

To escape my English-speaking Arab friends, therefore, I left Aden. Two days later, I received at Lahaj a letter from the Qadi Abdullah informing me of the receipt of a reply from His Eminence the Imam permitting me and my companion to come to San'a.

' Let me know when you wish to leave and I will send one of my men with you to Mawia, where the Ameer'ul-Jaish (Commander of the Army) will receive you and furnish you with a military escort to the Noble Seat. You are of us, O dear Philosophe, and it is our duty to serve you.'

But on the same day I received another letter from the Aden Residency, which is as follows :—

To Ameen Rihani, Esq.

DEAR SIR :

With reference to your letter dated the 1st instant, I write to inform you that I have asked His Highness the Abdali Sultan whether he can arrange to furnish you and Mr. Constantine Yanni with a suitable escort from Lahaj as far as the border of our Protectorate.

I shall address you again after receiving his reply.

Yours truly,

(Signed) B. M. REILLY, Major.  
1st Assistant Resident, Aden.

That is not all. The Major also wrote to the Sultan not to allow us to proceed till he finds out how safe is the road. We were not only the guests of His Highness, therefore, but also his prisoners. Besides, there was small-pox in Lahaj, and Captain Yanni fell sick, and two English-speaking Arabs, who followed us from Aden, still hovered around us, and when the servant brought the tea tray the biscuits were covered with flies. It was maddening. Flies and small-pox and spies ! Jeddah in comparison was a paradise.

But nothing could poison the hospitality and the kindness of the Sultan Abd'ul-Karim Fadl, who was ready and willing to do the right thing. He knew that the road through his own territory was safe ; the English themselves knew it was safe ; my English-speaking Arab also knew it was safe : but there is always the danger of a sudden outbreak. 'When the Sherif of Mecca sent a Delegation to San'a,' this from my English-speaking Arab brother, 'they were attacked by the Bedu, but they escaped, Allah be praised.' I was also told by the same one that when the Residency desires a certain reply from the Sultan to its communication, one of its English-speaking Arab friends is sent to Lahaj in advance with an oral

message. This is a fact ; I found such a man at the Palace before the Residency's letter arrived. The Sultan's reply was that the road is safe, but that an escort would make it safer.

On April 4th, Consul Cross received a letter from Major Reilly telling him that he had written to the Sultan about an escort, and repeating the warning that 'the Resident can accept no responsibility whatever for the safety of these two gentlemen.' 'I have replied,' wrote the Consul, 'that I am informing you to that effect, and that I am not responsible either. . . . I shall keep after him and hope that things will go through promptly.'

But when the Residency was informed of the telegram which the Qadi 'Arashi had received from the Imam, its English-speaking friends came to me with another suggestion. The road from Hudaidah to San'a is safer, and shorter, and easier. Why not go through Hudaidah ? It was a manoeuvre to get me to visit first the Idrisi, who was the friend of the English ; and having travelled in Tihamah, I might change my mind about going up to San'a.

The situation was getting insufferable. Five-sixths of this business was not in the hands of the English, who wanted to have everything to say about it. What would they do if the whole matter was actually under their control ? But the ruler of the country welcomed us to his Capital ; his Representative at Aden promised us a safe conduct ; and the Sultan Abd'ul-Karim was willing to furnish the escort to the border.

'And what do we want with the English ?' I think in that moment of anger I said something else to His Highness. 'We are satisfied with Arab protection, and if we are killed on the way, it will be for the love of the Arabs.'

The Sultan laughed and ordered me a narghilah. He then told his secretary to write to the Residency saying that he was ready to furnish a suitable escort.

On the following day came this word from Cross :—

DEAR RIHANI :

I saw Reilly last night and he promised to write this morning granting the escort. I told him about the telegram. His letter should arrive in the same mail with this. Things look very rosy for you now. But take care of yourself.

Very sincerely,

C. M. P. CROSS.

And here is a copy of the letter he mentions :—

No. C-395

ADEN RESIDENCY,

5th April, 1922.

To Ameen Rihani, Esquire.

DEAR SIR :

The Resident has asked the Abdali Sultan to provide an escort for you and Mr. Constantine Yanni up to the border of our Protectorate as soon as you are ready to start. He, however, desires me to inform you that the country is unsettled and travelling for Christians is dangerous, and that while asking the Abdali Sultan to provide an escort up to the border, neither he nor His Highness the Sultan can give you guarantee of safety.

The Resident, of course, can accept no responsibility whatever for arrangements beyond the Protectorate border.

Yours truly,

(Signed) B. M. REILLY, Major,

First Assistant Resident, Aden.

This recalled the first word said to me by Consul Cross : ‘ You may get your head cut off and no one will be responsible.’ I left with him what I did not need of my baggage, therefore, and gave him two addresses, in New York and in Beirut, to announce at least my death to my people.

Three months later I learned that one of the reasons

for the Residency's delay was that it had to wait for replies to its cables of inquiry sent to London and to Washington. But the danger, although exaggerated, did exist, especially in the country of the Hawashib, which is between Lahaj and southern Yaman. For the forces of the Imam had lately invaded their country, which is one of the Protectorates, and the authorities at Aden sent two aeroplanes which dropped bombs on the Yaman soldiers. Hostility still existed, however, between the two countries, and for this reason the Hawashib fired at the Yaman Delegation which was returning from Al-Hijaz. What will be our lot, I wondered, in passing through their country.

We were also told that if we go through Musaimir, the Hawashib capital, safely, we shall have passed the danger zone. But the word which the Qadi 'Arashi pronounced in his official capacity : ' If the road is not safe, we will make it so for your sake,'—and the words he wrote in a letter to the Imam, another to the Commander of the Army of Ta'iz at Mawia, and a third to myself—these were sufficient to overcome all that was dinned into our ears of the language of terrorisation. I am tempted to include in this chapter a translation of the Qadi's letter to the Imam as a specimen of the official style of correspondence in Al-Yaman.

In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the  
Compassionate

Allah prolong the reign of Mowlana, the Controller of our affairs, Prince of the Faithful and the Luminary of Creation, the Dependent on Allah. Peace upon him and the mercy of Allah and his blessings, to be ever repeated.

It is first to make salaam and to kiss the palm of Mowlana the Imam. This is sent with the Saiyed . . . Ameen Rihani . . . whose arrival at Aden and whose desire to visit the Noble Seat have been already reported by the slave of your Eminence. He carries much knowledge and wisdom in his breast which he

would lay before the Noble Seat. He also bears much love for the Arabs. Of a certainty, he is a man of many excellences. The Mutanabby of his time and the prince of those who take by the forelock the Rhyme. . . . I have written to the Ameer'ul-Jaish at Mawia, Allah protect it, to receive him according to his desert and facilitate his journey. And I pray Allah that his visit shall be the source of all good to Mowlana the Imam and to the nations of Al-Islam. More, I presume not to say. It is not for the like of me to offer counsel to the like of you. For Allah hath illumined your heart, so you know the real worth of every man and you give him more than his due. May Allah through you direct our affairs. Peace upon you.

From the Slave,

ABDULLAH'L-'ARASHI.

Before I close this chapter, I must record, especially for the benefit of the British authorities, the most regrettable, even though amusing, of their official acts in the matter. When the permit for our departure was issued, the Residency employed an Arab to accompany us secretly to San'a and report. For his better guidance, he was given a sealed envelope, to be opened after leaving Lahaj, containing a list of questions which he had to answer on his return.

But the man had an accession of conscience at the last hour and he changed his mind. Besides, he opened the Residency's envelope in the bazar at Aden Camp and showed the list of questions to some of the merchants. Espionage during the world war had to its name many strange and atrocious things ; and here is, after the war, one of its strange and amusing episodes.

## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE ROAD TO SAN'A

EARLY in the morning we got into a wheezing, rickety runabout, which, nevertheless, covered in an hour the twenty miles to Dukaim, the border town between Lahaj and the Hawashib country, where about 500 British soldiers of an Indian regiment were then encamped. The Sultan's *hajjans* (troops on dromedaries), the mules, the baggage, and the Resident-Qadi's messenger to the Commander of the Army of Ta'iz at Mawia, were there waiting for us, together with a few travellers who wished to join our caravan.

There also were ten fine looking, well-built riflemen in native buff, who were sent by the Sultan of the Hawashib to meet us at Dukaim and accompany us through his country. The escort of *hajjans* and privates was thus furnished by the two Sultans, and seemed quite sufficient to meet any emergency. But Younis, a loud-voiced and loquacious Arab who was to accompany us to Ibb, and who had long been in the service of the Turks, and was looked upon as master of the road, did not think that the escort was at all necessary. Sheikh Saleh 'Arashi's messenger was, however, woefully disappointed. The escort was not at all adequate. Between the two, as they disputed, stood an old man—Abu-Hasan they called him—who reminded them that they were Muslems; that a Muslem dependeth upon Allah in all things; that the will of Allah will always prevail; and that should he will it, praised be he, that we be attacked, and robbed, and slaughtered, an escort of 1,000 were like an escort



of ten. Saying which, he got on his donkey, praising Allah, and we followed in his pious steps.

To our left, as we proceeded northward, in a lava valley, are the hills of the lawless Subbailha Arabs, while to our right is Dhale', another lawless Protectorate; and soon we come to a depression in the valley called At-Tannan, which is the battlefield of lawlessness and lucre. At-Tannan (The Ringing) will ever echo with the cries of those fallen in the fight; there is something in its rocks which moans, echoes the spirit of moaning when struck—this is the local superstition. But these rocks, says the geologist, have fallen from the surrounding hills, which abound with iron ore. And, above all knowledge, is the knowledge of Allah, as Abu-Hasan said.

Nevertheless, he was the first to pick up a stone, when we came to a row of cairns alongside the road, and add it to one of them. Here the travellers from Al-Yaman, particularly if they are going to Aden, stop to make a vow to Allah, or to some preceding deity, to bring them safely home. The ceremony is to take up a stone and a stick and place them on one of the pile, saying :

*'Hajar w'oud w-inshallah n'oud.'*

(A stone and a stick and God willing we come back.)

The ceremony is also performed when the traveller returns safely; and some of the Hawashib soldiers followed Abu-Hasan's example. But they did not repeat his litany of praise, which he droned every time he got on or off his donkey. 'Praise be to Allah before all things; and praise be to Allah after all things; and praise be to Allah for all things; and praise be to Allah in all things. Everything passes, and he is the abiding, the eternal.'

Whereupon Abu-Hasan flourished his switch and came down with it upon his little donkey's side. He carried many things from Aden besides the pious Sheikh, that donkey; and among them was a case of petroleum with the legend of a Texas company upon it. Most amusing

to me was Texas under the robes of Abu-Hasan. Robes, indeed ! He wore three of them, and they were all oily but not inflammable. He also covered his turbaned head with a shawl, and puzzled it moreover with questions about the Koran.

‘What is meant, O Effendi, by the saying, “*And if you reveal and if you conceal, Allah will punish and reward.*”’ To my obvious explanation of the all-knowingness of Allah, he added : ‘He knows everything, of a truth, and his angels write down everything—for us and against us. Make the account in our favour, O Allah, and forgive us what we conceal.’ The sun was getting too hot, and in addition to the turban and the shawl which already covered his head, concealed it, he added a third—a black umbrella with three holes in it and a white patch.

We were now going through Wadi Shamoul, a green valley with an attractive stream (it is also called Wadi Duban and reaches up the mountains as far as Ibb) ; but the hills which rise closely on both sides induce a stagnation in the atmosphere and make it, in spite of the verdure and the water, very oppressive to the foreign traveller. The sun was, moreover, pouring fire upon our heads, and we were not all so wise as Abu-Hasan. The natives, in fact, with a pious exception, seldom ever complain of the weather. They bare their bodies to the sun, which bronzes and quickens and polishes their skin ; it also gets into their blood and thus provides them with a weapon against the tropic heat—helio-homeopathy !

The Hawashib soldiers encumber not themselves with kit and clothes ; and those in the lower Yaman are the lightest and the strongest of the fighters of Arabia. With a cloth around his loins, fastened by a cartridge belt, and the rifle on his shoulder, and sometimes a kerchief around his head as a turban, the Hawshibi is ever ready for a fight or for a ten days’ hike. Like a goat, he scampers

before you barefoot over the burning rocks ; his black skin shining in the sun like burnished bronze ; his sinewy muscles moving rhythmically like the mechanism of a watch ; and through his perspiration could be seen the reflection upon his back of the butt end of his gun—even the reflection of the brachial muscles while swinging his arm. And what an admirable walk. His torso, except for the subtle play of his muscles, barely moves ; even when he runs down a slope to get ahead of us as we wind down the road.

The Hawashib are the black devils of the lower Yaman—and such handsome, and healthy, and clean devils ! I have not seen one with a sore or a pimple or a boil upon his skin, except the cauterization across the chest, which is performed in childhood to protect them against colds ; and I do not think that the germs of disease can ever thrive in their blood.

One of these Hawashib soldiers, a boy of fifteen, walked alongside of my mule and looked up every now and then with a question and a desire in his eyes. He wanted to speak, but he did not seem to know how to begin. We were making a turn in Wadi Shamoul, and beyond the hills, which were receding from us, loomed in the distance a sharp and imposing peak mantled with haze. Whereupon the boy exclaimed : ‘ That is Warwah. You see it from Aden and you will see it to-morrow from Mawia.’ I am not certain about the first half of his statement, because I was not interested, when in Aden, in distant mountains, but there is an exaggeration in the second half. Warwah accompanied us the first day only, even as the boy-soldier himself, who had to leave us at Musaimir. I was sorry, for he was a charming companion, and his talk, as he moved his rifle, which was evidently too heavy for him, from shoulder to shoulder, had in it a child-like innocence and truth. But he walked with his head in the air, in spite of the heavy burden his words defined.



OUR ESCORT FROM DAKAISON.



MY HENCHMEN.

To face page 22.

100

—

100

'Forgive me, O Ameer, art thou of Ash-Sham?' I replied, 'Yes.'

'And is Ash-Sham content with the rule of the Sultan?' I told him that the Sultan no longer ruled in that country (Syria), and he was not pleased.

'Allah! The Sultan is not bad.' When I asked him if he liked the Turks, he nodded his affirmative and emphasized it with a twinkle of the eye.

'Said Pasha<sup>1</sup> is a good man. In his days there was plenty of *zalat*,<sup>2</sup> and we were at peace. But to-day, there is no Said, and no *zalat*, and no peace. . . . What is our life, O Ameer? Look at that mountain. Behind it are the Subbahiha, an iniquitous people, whose business is slaughter and robbery. They always make incursions into our land—the land of a peaceful people. A poor people, we the Hawashib. But we keep the roads safe, and for that we are attacked by the Subbahiha, whose business is to waylay the caravans. We fight for the safety of the caravans; and we are always, as you see, ready with the *bundoq* (rifle). We must neglect our fields and fight—here is the fighting place' (we were then passing through At-Tannan) 'and it is not safe for the Ameer without us. Our *bundoqs*, yea, *wallah!* and our lives are in the hands of the Sultan, and he has sent us to protect you. . . . Do you rule in your land, *ya Ameer?*'

I told him that I was neither an Ameer nor a ruler; but one ruled like himself.

'And who rules you, O perfect one?'

'At present, the English. Do you like the English?'

'The Sultan says that there is no evil in the English.'

'And do the Hawashib like their Sultan?'

'We like him, *wallah!* Ali ibn Mane' is a good man—no evil in him. But what are the Hawashib and what is their importance. The *bundoq* on their shoulders, and

<sup>1</sup> The Commander of the Turkish forces in Al-Yaman during the war.

<sup>2</sup> Silver and gold coins.

death on their path. The night makes no promise to us of a coming dawn.'

It was particularly poignant to him that the Hawashib, who must keep the road safe for caravans, could not make it safe for themselves.

From Al-Khundoq, a mud and straw village three hours from Dukaim, where we stopped for lunch, we sent a *hajjan* with a note to the Sultan Ali ibn Mane', informing him of our coming. Here, for the first time, we were introduced to the *samsarah* (called in Syria *khan* = inn) of the lower Yaman. There were two in Al-Khundoq, built of brushwood and roofed with Persian reeds, which take in every member, bipeds and quadrupeds, of a caravan, and everything pertaining to it. At one side is a platform of clay spread with mats of straw or of camel hair for the men; the rest of the place is for the animals—donkeys and camels and mules, cows and sheep and chickens—which do not always, however, keep their place. Those that can, come up to the platform, which is called a *mighayah* (café), where the travellers sit down to sip, in large earthen bowls, the unsugared brew of the coffee husks, while the proprietor, a mass of black flesh reclining near the coffee fire and smoking his narghilah, is as oblivious as a god.

Two things I should here tell you, before we resume our march. The narghilah in Al-Yaman is called *mada'ah* (from the Arabic word to invite: an invitation to *keif*) and she says according to the poet:

' I am the sultan's guest,  
The friend of sheikh and bard ;  
Be gentle, I request,  
And do not blow too hard.'

Travellers carry their *mada'ahs* with them. Abu-Hasan's hung among his packs on his donkey's side, and that of Younis was carried by his servant, who walked before his mule. The other thing I must here tell you is that in

Al-Yaman, which produces the best coffee bean in the world, the people very seldom drink coffee. The national drink is the brew of the coffee husks, which tastes unsugared like sage tea and has a very wholesome effect. But one of their dissipations, the most prevalent and the most dominant, which will be treated in the next chapter, overcomes all the virtues of any husk or herb.

We proceeded to Musaimir, the capital of the Hawashib, which is from Al-Khundoq about the same distance as Al-Khundoq is from Dukaim ; and we were met on the way by more rifle-bearing ebony Arabs, who accompanied us to a certain point, where another naked squad escorted us to within a mile from the Capital. There, we heard the firing of rifles ; and immediately after, before we had time to think the worse, five men in clothes, and on fiery steeds, were seen, at the turn of the road, galloping towards us. Again they fired their rifles three times in the air, and our Lahaj escort the *hajjans*, fired in return a like salute.

It was the heir to the Hawashib throne who had come out with his bodyguard to welcome us to his father's capital. Muhsin ib Ali ibn Mané', a boy of fourteen with sparkling black eyes, wore the usual lower Yaman skirt—two yards of a plaited Indian fabric rather, wound tightly around the body down to a little beyond the knee and held by a girdle that boasted of a silver-hilted dagger ; he also wore a waist of barred silk buttoned up to the neck, and an unusually large and multicoloured turban. But he was barefoot, and he rode with his toe in the stirrup, holding lightly the rein, while his other hand was busy keeping his holiday turban in its place. He could not master it as he did his prancing steed. He had to wind it three times, in fact, before we reached Musaimir.

Beautifully situated on the hilltop, overlooking Wadi Shamoul, is the capital of the Hawashib ; and the spread of green and water below, with its mud and straw huts



and the slowly moving forms twixt home and pasture, bespeak a scene of bucolic charm and peace. But there is no peace in the heart of Ibn Mane' nor in his kingdom. More of his soldiers met us outside the Palace gate, wasting more lead, and more in the court standing at arms. Were we from a hostile tribe, coming to negotiate peace, we should have been favourably impressed.

Young Muhsin led us up to the *madhif*, which is an extension of the three-storied Palace, and which consists of two small, dark, low-ceiled rooms opening on an ample roof. Half an hour later a shrunk little man, very thin and very weak—a spectre of a man—crossed the bridge, which connects the Palace with the *madhif*. It was the Sultan; and he was followed by three men carrying the meal he had provided for us.

After making our salaams inside, we moved to the roof, where they spread the supper, which consisted of rice and lamb, cakes of bread steeped in melted and sugared butter, a large bowl of soup, and excellent honey. We ate with our hands, of course; and the Sultan, seeing how well I managed the rice, exclaimed: '*Wallah*, ya Ameen you are of us.'

He took me afterwards into his confidence. '*Wallah*, ya Ameen, I am between Four (fires, devils, enemies)—Four who are shortening my life.' (I did not realize, nor did he, perhaps, that it was coming so soon to an end, for he died a few months later and was succeeded by his son Muhsin.) 'This is my son,' pointing to the boy; 'and these are the white hairs,' pointing to his beard. 'I am old and tottering. But I would rather slay him, *billah*! than deliver him as a hostage to anyone.<sup>1</sup> But the Four who are shortening my life—those up there<sup>2</sup> make war at us because we are a peaceful people; those down there<sup>3</sup> attack us because they think we are getting

<sup>1</sup> He refers to the hostage system of the Imam Yahya.

<sup>2</sup> The soldiers of the Imam.

<sup>3</sup> The Subbahiya tribe.

rich from the caravans, or that the gold chest of the Ingliz is at our disposal; the others beyond those mountains<sup>1</sup> fear not Allah; and he the fourth,<sup>2</sup> who has asked us to escort you through our country, is a changeling—our friend to-day, our enemy to-morrow—and we don't know when he is going to change. We must fight them all, ya Ameen; and *wallah!* we will fight until the last seed in the tribe is crushed. . . . No, by the great Allah! We do not overcharge the caravans: only one *real* a camel. The Imam collects two, and he of Lahaj three.'

'What is your *mushahirah* (monthly stipend from the British Government),' I asked.

The Sultan Ali looked at me, and with one hand to his beard and the three middle fingers of the other raised, he said: 'And they are never paid in full, *wallah!* One thousand and six hundred rupees every six months. Calculate it. Is it not two hundred short? And we must keep the roads safe, and keep our men satisfied; and there are other tribes—kindred tribes—who come to us when in need, and we must house and feed them. The Ingliz are a necessity, ya Ameen.'

'If the Imam pays you more than the Ingliz,' I asked, 'would you change?' 'No, *wallah!*' he replied. 'I have pledged my faith to the Ingliz, and I am not one to change or to break faith. I shall always remain the friend of the Ingliz. Aye, *billah*. The Ingliz have wisdom, ya Ameen, as well as gold. . . . Of a truth, the Muslims are brothers, and the Ingliz are not Muslims: but the heart knoweth the brother, ya Ameen, and the political interest knoweth only the necessity.'

The Hawashib liked the Turks, because they are (or were), like themselves, of the Shafi'i (Sunnah) persuasion; and they do not like the Imam, because he is a Zaidi

<sup>1</sup> The Dhale' tribe.

<sup>2</sup> The Sultan of Lahaj.

(Shi'ah). Sectarianism is still at the root of these people's misery.

While I was talking with the Sultan, Captain Yanni was entertaining his son Muhsin—now Sultan Muhsin—with cigarettes and aviation stories. The bombing plane especially caught the ear of the father, who interrupted the conversation, to hear Yanni tell of its wonders. Muhsin's eyes danced with delight. 'Machine guns in the air showering fire upon the enemy—bombs hurled upon him from the air to destroy his fortresses—the bombing planes are the winged heralds of victory—they are.' Muhsin's slender fingers were twitching, and at the height of his enthusiasm, slapping Captain Yanni on the leg, he exclaimed: 'Send us some of them.'

We said good-bye to the Sultan that evening and thanked him for his hospitality, for we intended to leave very early in the morning and we did not want him to get up at that hour. He consented, as I understood. But when at dawn the following day the men were saddling and packing in the court, something very strange and very alarming happened. Having slept on the roof, I heard, while I was dressing, a crash, as of a broken pitcher, below; but thinking that it fell from one of the palace windows I did not pay any attention to it. Very soon, however, I *saw* another piece of earthenware fly out of the window and smash among the mules and muleteers. A piece of it must have struck the loud-voiced Younis, who exclaimed: '*Ya ho!* Do you want to kill us with a pot? We have *bundoqs*, *ya ho!* We are men.' A minute later a volley of pots and pans shot out of the window, no human accent accompanying. '*Ya ho!*' Younis again, this time addressing us. 'Do you know what that means? It means get ye out of here—out ye! and quickly.'

We took the hint, loud and broad enough, and hastened, Captain Yanni and I, out of the palace. A few men, including the *hajjans*, followed, while others were still loading or harnessing their mules. We descended the

slope to the wadi and thought we were out of danger, but before we had forded the stream we heard a voice saying : ' Stop ye ! Stop ye ! ' We did not stop. The voice cried again, and several rifles were fired. I imagined the worse, and so, I think, did my companion. But he did not show it. ' Here is the danger we have been warned against,' said I, reining my mule. I carried no arms, and I was ready to surrender. But Captain Yanni, who carried all the weapons—a rifle, two pistols and a dagger—jumped to the ground saying : ' The hour has struck, and I am ready.' The *hajjans*, when the rifles were fired, galloped back to do their duty.

But soon the soldiers were seen coming down the hill, and with them the Sultan's servants carrying trays upon their heads. They were after us, to be sure, but not with guns—they were after us with the breakfast ! And they blamed us, reproached us, chided us. Are we not wanting in the etiquette of hospitality to thus depart without breakfast, and to thus depart without seeing the Sultan who got up early to say good-bye to us ?

We asked them about the pots and pans that were thrown upon our men, and they said that the Sultanah, who had seen me from her window across the way rise early, was anxious that we get our breakfast before we leave. But the servants on the floor below were still asleep, and she would not be heard or seen by the stranger ; she could not look out of the window to call them. Hence the pots and pans that crashed in the courtyard. The guests ! Up and attend to the guests ! That is how she wakes up her servants when she cannot cudgel them out of sleep. Aye, and she made them follow us with the breakfast that morning, and ordered the soldiers to fire their rifles if we did not stop.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GHAT

THE peak of Warwah, which looks like the profile of a pontiff wearing his tiara and sitting upon his throne, continues to watch over us as we pass out of Musaimir, until we come to a wadi midway between it and Duraijah, where the five horns of another peak—five needles of rock standing upon the pyramidal form of Mt. Humar—loom before us above the narrowing horizon. After four hours' march from Musaimir through a country sparsely verdant, going up and down the hills, fording a few streams, and crossing several dry river beds called wadis—the same Wadi Duban, which, like a Paris boulevard, has many continuations and many names—we come to Duraijah, the last village of the Hawashib to the north. The '*Aaqel* (Wise One), as the sheikh of a village is called in the lower Yaman, who had been previously informed of our coming, met us outside the town, and insisted on taking us to his house. But, dreading their dark and stuffy cubby-holes of mud or straw, I lost my politeness, and spoke in the language of the Bedu : ' We cannot abide roofs, O worthy '*Aaqel*. We are children of the open and we love your sky.'

So, in the shadow of the acacia trees near the running stream at the foot of the village, the '*Aaqel* received us and made us eat his rice and mutton in the name of the Sultan Ali. We rested for an hour in that pleasant spot and heard the people's complaints. For we were nearing the frontier of the Imam's country, and some of the Imam's men, who had fought in the battle of the Taiyarah (aeroplane—two aeroplanes flew from Aden to aid Sultan Ali), fled when it began to throw bombs, escaped across the border, and

were living with the Hawashib in security. They gathered around us, squatting in a semicircle and leaning upon their rifles.

To my question of how they were faring, one of them replied : ' We complain, but only to Allah. Our friends are here, but up there is the Dog (meaning the Governor of Mawia). We fought for him—never turned our backs. We fight who meets us in the fight, but what can we do when the enemy is in the air, and is armed ? We run to a shelter from the lead he was raining upon us, and the Dog says we betrayed the Imam. The Dog confiscates our homes, our cattle, everything, and we escape slaughter. We come here and find peace and friendship.'

' If the war is renewed,' I asked, ' would you fight against the soldiers of the Imam or would you join them again to fight the Hawashib ? '

' We fight not with this one or with that one,' said the orator of the people. ' We are loyal to our friends—we are loyal to the Imam. Tell him that, when you see him. We give him our blood ! ' and he slapped the side of his neck to emphasise his word. ' But the Dog of Mawia, we would fight any one against him. Tell him that, when you see him. Son of sixty dogs ! He will yet be slain like a sheep, *inshallah*. This dagger,' pointing to his own, ' will yet drink his blood, *inshallah*.'

Younis, who knows the ' Dog ' of Mawia, applauded the orator. But he told me afterwards that he, the said ' Dog,' was like a Turk, wily and treacherous. ' Say nothing about these people when you see him, and let us proceed in peace.' Younis himself was steeped in the manner of his former masters, although he had an epigram against them, which he was always repeating. ' If we are loyal to you,' I used to say to the Turks, ' you enslave us ; and if we are treacherous, you kill us.' I doubt whether he ever had the courage to say so in the face of a Pasha or a Pasha's valet. Once on the road, when he was repeating his famous epigram, one of the

Hawashib soldiers asked : ' And is the rule of the *sherifs* better ? ' He meant the rule of the Imam. Whereupon, one of his fellow-soldiers gave utterance to another epigram. ' Rather disease and grief than the rule of a *sherif*.'

The Hawashib men who were supposed to return from Duraijah, accompanied us another mile beyond it, where two fortresses, on two opposite hills not very far apart, mark the frontier ; they had neither the authority nor the desire to enter into the land of the Zioud. We said good-bye to them there and proceeded, under the Lahaj escort of *hajjans*, to Mawia, ascending to a plateau from which we had an extended view of the country. We were leaving behind us the peak of Warwah ; but the horned Humar was still before us, while Mt. Am-amah appeared in the west and Mt. Shujaj loomed eastward in the distance. The height is a little more than 1,000 feet above the sea ; the vegetation is more profuse, and among the semi-tropical plants we recognize the aloes and a few varieties of the cactus. Traversing the plateau, we descend into the most attractive of wadis—Wadi Lusab—which is an avenue of flourishing tamarisks, a welcome stretch of shade after a long day in the glare of the Yaman sun ; and reaching the end of it, four hours after we left Duraijah, we go up a rocky road to the summit of the hill and behold the first house, a four-storey, fort-like stone structure, of Mawia.

From the roof of another house came the notes of a bugle which had a very pleasant effect. A bugle betokened a little order and civilization, and it was quite refreshing after going through the wilds of the Protectorates. But that was the opening note in the overture of official welcome ; for as we descended the hill, the strains of a band greeted our ears, and soon the band itself, at the head of a long line of soldiers, greeted our eyes. The children of the village, boys and girls, and some men had also gathered and were squatting on the hilltop.



HIMYARITE STATUETTE.  
Excavated in the Lower Yaman.

To face page 32.





We alighted, and a Turkish officer gave the order of present arms ; we passed the first line of long-haired, blue-kirtled soldiers and came to two more on either side of the gate ; we entered, and we were overwhelmed with more music and more military salutes ; we proceeded through the vast court, and we were welcomed by a hunchback Turk in a calpac and European clothes, the secretary of the Ameer, who walked ahead of us to the door of the citadel. There we were stopped by the sentry for no reason, after all this extravagance of the military, that I could fathom. But he shouted an unintelligible word to another sentry within or above and waited. I looked at the secretary, who assured me with a pleasant smile. There was no fear of our being denied admittance. Soon another unintelligible word was shouted from within, and the sentry, without saying anything, moved away from the door.

We entered, and that was the beginning of the horrible in Mawia. The Zioud soldiers not only dye their skirts and their turbans in indigo blue, but they smear their bodies also with it, because, as they believe, it protects them from the cold. What they do is to soak a garment in the dye and wear it before it dries. Thus a Zaidi soldier always smells of indigo ; and to give his long shaggy hair a lustre and a snap, he rubs it with melted butter.

Indigo and butter ! A whole regiment steeped in them is sufferable in the open. But when we entered the citadel, the concentrated smell almost caused a swoon. My head for a moment reeled. But there were other smells and other horrors. A stable was on the bottom floor, and between it and the top floor, where the Ameer makes his *majlis*, is a stone staircase on whose steps and landings were more indigo men, some of whom, with their painted eyes, looked like women. I shuddered as I stumbled up the high steps, the kind hunchback Turk holding me by the hand ; and I was assailed none the less

with the thought of being held a prisoner in this gloomy and noisome citadel, with a fierce-looking indigo fanatic as my jailor.

But worse than the fear was the disgust I felt when the guard admitted us into the presence of the Ameer. Imagine yourself in a  $12 \times 8$  room with a very low ceiling, whose small windows, except one, are closed ; whose floor is covered with grass and straw ; whose atmosphere is like that of a *hasheesh* den of Cairo ; and around whose walls are seated a score of bearded, turbaned and robed Zioud, all chewing at something, and some of whom are smoking the *mada'ah*. In the corner of this room, behind a little desk, near which was a *mada'ah* amidst a heap of papers, sat cross-legged a sharp-eyed, high-browed heavy-turbaned little man, to whom the secretary presented us with a gesture. This was the illustrious Saiyed Ali ibn'ul-Wazir, the Commander of the Army of Ta'iz. He gave us his hand without standing and pointed to a place where we had to squeeze ourselves, Captain Yanni and I, between the two truculent beards and feel, in our boots and breeches, as we tried to squat or sit flat, the most miserable of men. Besides, not one of these reverend sheikhs seemed to have any benevolence or sympathy in his eyes. On the contrary, they cast side-long, arrow-like glances at us, without saying a word.

The wonder was that I could say anything. But I did succeed in giving utterance to a few words about our journey to the Seat of the Image of Perfection, His Eminence the Imam, on a mission which all Arab-speaking people will applaud. The Ameer's few words in reply fell with an effort from his lips. I then delivered to him the letter of the Qadi Abdullah'l-'Arashi, which he read, and folded, and placed under the cushion, without changing the impassiveness and the haughtiness of his manner. He then called to his secretary, and after whispering a word in his ear, he motioned us to go with

him. Needless to say, how glad I was that the interview was so brief.

I must explain, in justice to the Ameer, the presence of straw and grass on the floor of his *majlis*. We arrived about sunset, when he and his guests had finished eating the *ghat*, which is brought from the hills, a day's distance from Mawia, wrapped in green grass or foliage and bound with straw or reed bark to keep it fresh. These bundles are brought into the *majlis* and placed before the Ameer, who distributes them among his *ghat* party. The proper way to do this is not to offer a bunch to your guest, but to throw it at him. 'He never threw a bunch of *ghat* at anyone,' says a Yamani of a miser.

With this distribution the *ghat* eating begins. Everyone opens his bundle, picks the leaves from the twigs for chewing, and throws the grass wrappings and binders and sticks on the floor. That is also why I slipped several times going up and down the stairs. The soldiers were chewing their *ghat* rations.

Now, what is *ghat* (*al-qat* with a soft q = gh)? As we shall meet with it everywhere in the Yaman, and as it is inseparable from the life of the people, even as the Koran, let me tell you, before we proceed up the mountains, something about it.

*Ghat* (*Catha edulis*) is a small perennial tree or shrub, without blossom or seed, resembling the spindle tree or the terebinth, whose privet-shaped leaves have a styptic taste.<sup>1</sup> It is planted in cuttings, is cultivated in the upper Yaman at a height of from 2,000 to 7,000 feet, like the coffee tree, and is a product for home consumption as important as wheat or corn. There are varieties of it as in coffee, the best being the Bukhari, which grows in the district to which it is attributed.

I first tasted of *ghat* in Aden at the house of the Resident-Qadi, who introduced it to me in these words: 'This is our sovereign habit, O Philosophe, and it is one of the

<sup>1</sup> The leaves may be dried and used also either as tea or tobacco.

bounties of Allah. We chew it, and through it we recover our strength. We obtain a little *keif* too ; not the *keif* which wine affords, but a *keif* of the spirit—a bodily repose—a spiritual satisfaction, which otherwise we do not feel, except, of course, through religion. *Al-ghat* is our food and our coffee. We all indulge in it. Some of us spend as much as ten, even fifteen, rupees a day for it. If you are drooping, like a plant athirst, a little of the *ghat* will refresh you and bring back your energy. No, my dear Philosophe, it is not an aphrodisiac. It has the contrary effect. Those who are away from their wives take it as a fortifier of fidelity—an aid to sexual patience.<sup>1</sup> It also keeps you awake, if you have to travel or perform at night long religious exercises. The virtues of *al-ghat* are many, O dear Philosophe, and we would have you try it.’

Saying which, he took up a few twigs, picked their tenderest leaves and offered them to me. ‘Yes, chew them, and let them linger in the mouth. Yes, yes, swallow the juice, but not the leaves—thus.’ He looked as if he had a swollen jaw from the wad he had in his mouth. A portion is sometimes retained for an hour, much as the American chews tobacco ; but it is replenished every five or ten minutes, and when all the juice is absorbed, the residue is spat into a brass cuspidor made in the shape of an hour-glass. The spittoons of the Sultan of Lahaj, which are gold-plated, look like chalices.

Another requisite of *ghat*, which produces thirst, like caffeine, is a jug of water ; and nothing is sweeter and more agreeable than water, while chewing at the leaves, because of their pleasant bitter tang.

The third requisite of a *ghat* party is the *mada‘ah*, which acts as a cooling medium between the chew and the drink,

<sup>1</sup> Excessive use of it inflames the prostate and causes a mild paralysis, which lasts several hours, of the genitals.

and they close the windows to keep the smoke in the room and thus give it a *hasheesh* atmosphere.

There is something both of caffeine and morphine in *ghat*. As in morphine, the higher faculties are excited by directly influencing the cells of the convolution, but not, as is supposed, the cerebral circulation. It makes one talkative, but not intellectually keen. It also removes fatigue and languor, as does caffeine, and increases the capacity for work. But I cannot say that it induces a lightness of the spirit, a *keif*. Depression, in fact, follows exhilaration, but not as soon as it does in morphine.

Its first effects upon me were talkativeness, sleeplessness and indigestion, and it only stimulated my mind in the consideration of the power of illusion upon the mind. The Yamani can go for several days without food, but not a single day without *ghat*. Men and women and children, they all use it. I have no doubt that it is bad for the health, for it undermines the virility of the race. But another of their habits, which may partly offset the effects of the sovereign one, is that they drink the brew of the coffee husks instead of the coffee beans. It is like taking a stimulant and then a cup of sago tea.

I doubt, however, whether the effects of the two are entirely neutralizing. Of the contrary effects of *ghat* itself, I have heard much. It is cooling, it is drying; it reduces the heat of the body and it dries up the moisture.<sup>1</sup> It stimulates and it soothes; it brings rest and it revives the energy; it acts as a laxative as well as an astringent; it gives you the feeling of *keif* and it makes you dumb with melancholy. *Ghat* 'gets the goat' of the investigator.

It is also said that it was a goat who first discovered its virtues to man. One of a flock, the goatherd once observed, was acting in an unusually frisky manner. He leaped at the back of his fellows, stood on his hind legs, dug his horns in the ground, and ran merrily around a certain bush. At another time the goatherd saw him

<sup>1</sup> As in morphine, it diminishes the secretions, 'dries up the system.'

asleep near the bush, and, pursuing his observations, he noticed him, a few days after, feasting upon its twigs. Whereupon the goatherd, with inspiration and courage, tried some of the leaves himself and became as buoyant as his goat. He hastened back to the town to tell of *his* discovery, and the poet was the first to go with him to the hills to ascertain the truth of it. There was no doubt in what the goatherd said, but he did not say enough. Here, indeed, was a celestial herb ; and the poet, who has always been the most unselfish of mankind, would not have the exclusive use of it. He would bring it—a boon—to the people. So he carried an armful of the twigs back to town that day—a little more than 400 years ago—and thus began the use in Al-Yaman of what he called *the food* (al-qat).

The poet then extolled, as he does still, its virtues in rhyme. One of the many *qasidahs* I have read begins thus :—

‘ Come with the tender twig of *ghat*, the new,  
With still upon its leaves the forest dew.’

Another poet chides those who would advise him against it, and says :—

‘ Its emerald leaves melt in the heart of friends,  
And in the heart of life a gladness sheds ;  
Waste not thy blame, or cut its rotten ends—  
We shall not leave the *ghat*, alive or dead.’

Aye, even the Sufi poet descends from his starry heights to crown its ‘ emerald leaves ’ with mystic rhymes. Here are two, which I am able to render into a tolerably intelligent English accent :—

‘ The winged horse of my heart, my spirit feeds  
And on it rides up to celestial meads.’

But the original line of the poet staggers with figures and allusions. The winged horse, he calls *Buraq*, the

steed of the Prophet Muhammad ; his heart is a ladder ; and his ecstatic spirit is the Angel Gabriel. Now, imagine the said Angel riding upon Buraq—*Ghat*—and galloping up the ladder to the highest heaven, and you will get an exact idea of the poet's fancy, as well as an appreciation of the translator's plight.

Even the everyday speech of the Yamani, whose accent is quite different from the Hijazi's and the Najdi's, is not easy at first to grasp. But we had no difficulty in understanding our kind hunchback Turk, who spoke Arabic with a Syrian accent, and who conducted us to a house, which is also like a fortress, on another hilltop, where we were greeted by more indigo soldiers and more smells. The ground floor is used as a stable and the *majlis* is a hundred high stone steps up, on the top floor. A narrow, low-ceiled room, this, with four little windows, which the servant hastened to close when we arrived, as if it was not, as it is, dark and stuffy enough ; and here Captain Yanni and I, and three servants, and Younis and Ali, and another loud-lunged one who attached himself to our party, were all to sleep.

I asked, considering this terrible situation, if there were any wild animals in the neighbourhood ; and I was assured that there were two very strange and ferocious beasts, one called *tahish*, who carries human beings away, and the other *nabbash*, who digs up graves and eats up the dead. Dead or alive, therefore, I could not escape. While I discredited the thrilling stories my hunchback friend <sup>1</sup> told about these two monsters, however—still—well—my fear was exceeded by my depression and disgust. Surely, thought I, the *tahish* and the *nabbash* could not scale those high walls of the fortress ; and the roof, praise be to Allah, was accessible.

<sup>1</sup> His description of the *tahish* was confirmed to me by an ' eye-witness ' at Ibb. He is as big as a donkey, with a grey stomach, a white breast, and a back striped grey and black. His eyes are set lengthwise in his head, his mouth reaches from ear to ear, his hindfeet are shorter than his forefeet, and he has a line of bristling hairs running down his back from head to tail.



While I was thus trying to solve the problem of where I was to sleep that evening, a cousin of the Ameer came to see us, bringing with him a present of *ghat*, and Captain Yanni entertained him with stories about the aeroplane. 'We are not afraid of the *taiyarah*,' said the pious gentleman; 'we will read the opening chapter (of the Koran) against it and it will fall to the ground in pieces.' He also told us, while he rolled a big wad of *ghat* in his cheek, that wine is prohibited in Al-Yaman. 'If we find one drinking wine,' his two palms brushed against each other in a gesture of finality, 'we slay him forthwith.'

Without saying good-night to the gentleman, I sought, on the roof, the silence of the heaven and the companionship of the stars. But I was quickly followed by the hunchback Turk, the kind and thoughtful Turk, who came to tell me not to lean against the roof-wall. He found me, in fact, leaning against it, as over the railing of a steamer—embarked upon a sentimental reverie—and he quickly drew me away. I resented at first the interference, and I thought, even after his explanation, that his fear was exaggerated. But when I got up in the morning and saw that the roof wall was built of stones set loosely over each other without mortar, and that there were more than 100 feet between the roof and the rocks below, I praised Allah—and my Turkish friend—for the danger I had passed. But why, think you, is the wall thus loosely built? Should the robbers, or the neighbours, or the enemy, when at war, scale the wall of the house, as they often do, and reach the top, the first loose stone they get hold of will give way and down they will go, wall and wall-lizards together.

Indeed, Mawia was full of terrors for me, and the worse of all is what I am now to relate. The Qadi Abdullah'l-'Arashi, in his letter to the Ameer'ul-Jaish, spoke of me, whether casually or purposely, through mistake or respect, I know not, as the Saiyed Ameen Rihani. Now, in Al-Yaman, only a descendant of the Prophet is called Saiyed,

and as there are two lines of descendants through the Prophet's two grandsons Hasan and Husain from his daughter Fatimah (the first are called Sherifs, the second, Saiyeds), and as the Zaidis, followers of the Imam Zaid, a great grandson of Husain, have among their nobility descendants of Hasan also, the Ameer Ali, when I went to see him again on the following day, wanted to know of what branch I was. He took it for granted that I was a Muslem, but——

‘ Art thou a Hasani or a Husaini ? ’

His *majlis* this time was clean and his manner gentle. But his heavy-turbaned sheikhs, who sat as usual in rows against the walls, seemed to me even more truculent than they were the day before. Now, what if they learn that I am a Christian? Saiyed Ali's question fell upon me like a thunderbolt, and pictures of despair darkened my vision. Did not the English warn us of the danger to Christians? Did not the Arabs in Aden and Lahaj tell us the truth about the fanatic Zioud? And here we are in the *majlis* of one of their Saiyeds—and among their elders,—and in a fortress as dark and noisome as a dungeon, and——

‘ Art thou a Hasani or a Husaini ? ’

Answer me that, man. Will you accept the Prophet, having been honoured with his line? And what, pray, is Hasan and what is Husain? As much as to say, ‘ Art thou a Calvinist or a Lutheran ? ’ Indeed, the difference under the circumstances was even less. I still recall that in five glances at that ominous moment I changed my religion five times. My mind moved with lightning speed from Hasan, who was a saint, to Christ, and from Husain, who was a martyr, to Darwin. But suppose the Ameer knows afterwards the truth? Better then let him have it from thine own mouth. And what will happen, if before these fanatical Zaidis I avow myself a Maronite or a Unitarian or a Darwinian? They might hold me a captive, they might kill me, or they might do what is

worse than both—send me back to Aden. This, of a truth, I dreaded most.

But after changing my mind five times in five glances, Allah, be he ever praised, opened before me the door of salvation. 'I am an Arab,' I said, 'who embraces all the sects of Al-Islam, O thou most exalted Ameer, and who loves all the people of Arabia. Aye, *billah* ! And I always repeat the lines of the poet,

'I love thine every tribe and every part  
A love that springeth from my inmost heart.'

The Ameer was mightily pleased, especially with the poetry;<sup>1</sup> even the elders seemed to approve. But in changing the subject, after remarking that my case was an exception, 'a worthy exception,' he did not stray very far from the text. He pronounced a harangue, which began with Allah and the Prophet and ended with those Arabs in high places, naming King Husein and his sons, who betray Arabia and Al-Islam, and defile the nobility of the Prophet with English gold and English decorations. 'We are waging a war for Allah and Al-Islam, and every right Muslem should join in the jehad against the infidels, should take up arms to spread the word of Allah in the world. . . .'

I still wonder what he would have done had he known then that I was neither a Hasani nor a Husaini, and that I was not even interested in spreading 'the word of Allah in the world.'

<sup>1</sup> I am told that many of the descendants of the Prophet are not sure whether Grand Mother Fatimah sent them to the world through Hasan or Husain ; and that the Ameer Ali, who must have thought me of these, could not but approve of my desire, in avoiding the question, to be honest, at least, about it. But I still like to think that I was saved by the couplet of my friend Sheikh Fouad ul-Khatib, erstwhile Foreign Minister of the erstwhile Hashemite Government.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VERDANT YAMAN

ONE day in Mawia was sufficient, I thought, to atone for all my sins. I therefore made my excuses to the Ameer Ali, who arranged for our departure on the afternoon of the second day. The escort was, of course, changed ; for the Lahaj *hajjans*, who had to return from Mawia, were replaced by ten Zioud soldiers in indigo who tramped barefoot before us. But our caravan still consisted of the moody Sheikh Saleh, 'Arashi's messenger, who was ordered by the Ameer to accompany us to San'a ; the loud-lunged Younis, Father of the Epigram against the Turks, whose destination was Ibb, and the cantankerous Madani, our servant.

We rode westward to the hilltop which commands a magnificent view. The low lying hills, beyond the beautifully verdant Wadi Khalal below, rising modestly above each other in soft outline, looked like ocean waves at the foot of Mt. Sabr, which at that hour was the host of the sunset. Behind Mt. Sabr is Ta'iz, through which travellers, going from Mokha to San'a, must pass. But those going from Mawia turn northward after crossing the Wadi, which takes its name from the village Khalal crowning one of its hilltops. We crossed it in the dark, before the moon had risen, sensing the richness of its vegetation and enjoying the sound of rushing water.

After floundering for an hour among the hills, going no one knew in what direction, the moon, which was to guide us in our night march, rose above the mountain we had descended, and Younis, our self-appointed guide, exclaimed : '*Walhamdulillah !* You will follow me now

in the right path, *inshallah* ! ' It was his country and he knew it even better than the soldiers, whom he bullied and misled. The moon itself Younis would dismiss from service ; it shed a poor light, a misleading light withal. But having gone in every direction, meandering among those hills, which a few hours ago looked like a sea at the foot of Mt. Sabr, the right direction will eventually be struck, *inshallah*.

But it took three hours to do it, during which I was divided on my mule in two : half of me was asleep and half awake. I was in the midst of a phantasmagoria—saw towns where there was only a heap of rocks—saw Jinn among the bushes—heard Constantine calling to me as from another continent—heard the soldiers and Younis exchanging oaths and ribald jokes—indeed, I was in a land of phantoms who were gabbing in ragamuffin Arabic.

About eleven o'clock, however, the phantasmagoria resolved itself into the reality of a *samsarah*, near the village Humyarah, whose fires were ablaze and whose proprietors, a man and two women, were busy among the halting caravans. Here we rested half an hour, spoke to the women, drank their brew of coffee husks, and then resumed our march. Two hours later we arrived at a place called Sheikh Salah, which is a few coops and stables, where we were to sleep. I worried about my friend Constantine, who had to sleep in one of those coops with our party of fifteen, but he did not mind. ' I am a soldier,' he was fond of saying, ' and you are from New York.' Well, the New Yorker found the roof of that coop hedged with brambles ; but he got up there, nevertheless, with his cot, and stretched himself in his boots upon it, and shivered from the cold for three hours, without getting one-tenth as much sleep as the Greeko-Syrian officer of the Hijaz Army.

In the early dawn the caravan was ready to start, and after plodding for an hour through a cactus-covered



THE AMPHITHEATRE.

To face page 44.



country—never have I seen so many varieties of the specie—we leave the sun rising over Mt. Suraq behind us, and soon behold again the peak of Mt. Sabr. In another hour, as we meander in the hollow of this hill, we ascend northward and then descend into Wadi'z-Zahab (Valley of Gold) which belies not its name. It is the most beautiful in the lower Yaman, and the most fertile. Streams of water run through it, and in it are patches of different shades of green. We saw people harvesting (in April), and that is, I was told, one of the three crops a year the valley yields. It is also rich in its wild and odoriferous shrubbery; the jasmine and the clematis, peeping through the cactus, or hidden in a tangle of brambles, perfume its air.

On the slope of the opposite hill is the village of Zishrouq, and beyond, on the hilltop to our left, as we pass from Wadi'z-Zahab to Wadi Nakhlan, which is a continuation of it, and where for the first time we see the telegraph wire, is the larger village of Saiyanah. When we were nearing it, Younis and Sheikh Saleh had a dispute which ended in a separation. For the loud-lunged Father of the Epigram whipped his mule and rode away swearing to divorce his wife, if he ate his dinner with us. It was, to be sure, about the dinner and where we were to have it. Younis suggested—nay, Younis never did suggest, he ordered—that we have our noonday meal and rest under the famous tree Taulaqah, near its famous spring, half-way up the *naghil* (rocky road in a steep incline) of Saiyanah. But Sheikh Saleh insisted that we go into the village itself, and was supported by the soldiers, who were in hope of getting there some *ghat*. I favoured the idea of Younis, but I let him trot away, his servant carrying the *mada'ah* ambling by his side, till he had dissipated his bile.

He then stopped, waited for us, and spoke thus to me :  
' I am not a stupid or a base one. I have wisdom in my head and nobility in my heart. I know what is good for



you. I travelled before with honourable people, but never with a churl, pardon me, like that man. I want you to be comfortable and well pleased. What is in the village Saiyanah? All the joy is in the *naghil* Saiyanah, under the Taulaqah tree. I know whereof I speak—I have wisdom in my head.'

I asked Sheikh Saleh to agree, but he wouldn't do it. He, too, had sworn to divorce his wife, if he said 'Yes' to the braggadocio of Younis. Silently, therefore, we proceeded up the mountain, winding the rocky road of the *naghil*, till we had reached the ample shade of the ancient Taulaqah.

A capital spot, indeed. Besides, the water of the Saiyanah spring was the best and the coldest we had yet drank in Al-Yaman. But we did not have a love feast on the Taulaqah terrace, for both our *rafiqs* ate their dinner separately and apart from each other, since neither of them desired to divorce his wife. Sheikh Saleh refusing to share even in the milk and eggs which were brought to us by the proprietor of the Saiyanah *samsarah*. He did accept, however, a tablet of aspirin for his headache, and he shared in the entertainment which was afforded us by the *samsarah* man, who is not a worshipper of the Image of Perfection at San'a. He deplored the days of the Dowlah in Al-Yaman, when he could get Jewish girls from Ibb, even from the capital, to sing and dance and give my lord the Turk a favour. He was prosperous then and happy, for he could satisfy his four wives. But now, in the happy days of the Imam, he is poor and—crown of calamity!—in need of an aphrodisiac. Both Younis and Sheikh Saleh spoke out simultaneously: 'It is not the fault of the Imam.'

I think it is the fault of *ghat*; for during the past three days of our journey in the lower Yaman six people inquired of me if I carried anything in my medicine boxes which might revive their virility. Indeed, there were more demands for an aphrodisiac, as the use of

*ghat* increased, the higher up we went in Al-Yaman. The tyranny of habit and the greater tyranny of illusion. Yet they would be the most unhappy and perhaps the most incapable of people without it.

While the *samsarah* man was complaining in pathetic and amusing words, a man came up the *naghil* carrying on his back a load of *ghat*. Immediately he was besieged by the soldiers, who picked twenty-four bunches, for which I payed a Marie Theresa dollar (50 cents), and, taking a few myself, I invited Younis and Sheikh Saleh to join me. I wanted to put their oath of ' thrice divorced ' to the acid test, and I was surprised that Sheikh Saleh, without saying a word, immediately complied. But Younis babbled : ' I have nobility in my heart—I forgive—Allah is forgiving—I have wisdom in my head '—and he took a bunch of the precious twigs. Whereupon Sheikh Saleh spoke : ' Thou hast nothing in thy head but foolishness and ignorance. I am a *qadi* (judge), and I know the law. Thine oath and my oath pertained to the dinner—to food—and the *ghat* is not food. If thou art forgiving, I am knowing and illuminating. Take the *ghat* and be thou assured.' ' I am thy brother,' said Younis, ' thy grateful brother.' Thus, indeed, is *ghat* a mender of broken bonds.

We continue, after an hour's rest, up the *naghil*, which is the highest and steepest we had yet ascended, and coming to the summit of Mt. Mahris, about 1,000 feet above Wadi Nakhlan, we traverse what is called Najd'ul-Ahmar, and cross a stone bridge to Mahris, a village noted in these parts for its weekly fair. The single telegraph wire of the Imam accompanies us, swinging above the deep valley from one summit to another.

Soon after Mahris, a magnificent panorama of hills and peaks opens before us, and in the centre of the picture, crowning one of the hilltops below at the foot of Mt. Bu'dan, is the City of Ibb. We alighted to walk down the steep incline, or the other side of Mt. Mahris, and it took

us an hour and a half to reach the level of Ibb, which is about the same height above the sea (6,750 feet) as Wadi Nakhlan.

About a mile outside the walled city is a place called the Reception Ground, where we had to stop—both Younis and Sheikh Saleh insisted—until the ‘Amel (Governor), who had been informed of our coming that afternoon, sent a delegation to meet us. But soon after we alighted we heard the sound of bugle and drum, and lo ! out of the city gate and down the road came marching, not the ‘Amel’s Reception Committee, but the ‘Amel himself at the head of his staff, followed by his soldiers and about 1,000 of the citizens of Ibb. His Excellency, together with his two sons and the judge, all riding on high-stepping steeds, wore turbans of cloth of gold and green jubbahs over robes of barred silk. The soldiers were in the uniform indigo skirt, around which at the waist they wound jauntily a sash of a lighter shade, while their indigo turbans, whose loose ends reached down to the shoulder, were decorated with roses and twigs of sweet basil.

After a brief salaam, the ‘Amel and his staff mounted their chargers and we our mules, while the soldiers, preceded and followed by the citizens, marched up the hill again, sounding the bugle, beating the drum, and singing, while holding each other’s hand, the national anthem of Al-Yaman. A wild yawp it is, one to strike terror in the heart of the enemy, and with but two notes, the top tenor of the leaders and the *To ho ho haw whaho ho whaw* of the bass refrain. I could make nothing at first of the words, but here, as I was told afterwards, is one of the quatrains they were singing :

‘ Woe to them who Mowlana disobey !

A day will come when the sun and the moon will frown—

A day to turn the hair of infants grey

And bring the eagle from his heaven down.’

We marched in the procession, and for once I felt, although riding a jaded mule, like one of the cut-throat conquerors of old entering in triumph the stronghold of the enemy. The 'Amel at my right was my Grand Vizir, etc. But there, too, was Younis, who kept close to Glory, to remind me that only a few days ago I was baited by the British in Aden. As honest travellers, therefore, we enter the treble gate of the citadel-city, thread our way through its narrow streets, and stop before one of the houses of the 'Amel, who leads us up a dark stone staircase, over five landings, to the top floor, and there, into the reception hall, which is a very large room with several big windows, a high ceiling and white-washed walls. The furniture is pure Oriental in form and colour. The low diwans are covered, like the floor, with beautiful rugs, and the square cushions and *masnads* are encased in a cloth of triple bars, red and yellow and green. It is very cheerful and attractive, especially that there are no other colours in the room, saving the sombre voluptuousness of the rugs.

A traveller is told in Aden, in Lahaj, in Musaimir, everywhere, in fact, he stops on the way to Ibb, that Ismail Bey Ba-Salaamah is the most honourable and most generous of men. Originally from Hadhramout, of the Shaf'i persuasion, he is nevertheless, the only official of the Imam who does not have to surrender one of his sons as a hostage or a guaranty of loyalty. Honesty and justice crown his seat as a ruler; geniality and grace illumine his door as a host; generosity and kindness perfume his name as a man of wealth. He is loved by his tenants and domestics as he is by the people—and by every traveller who tastes of his hospitality and spirit. Had I not been told anything about him, I still would have read in his face the gist of what I have here set down; and unlike my behaviour in Mawia, when, as soon as we were shown to our quarters, I asked unashamed that we be allowed to leave in the morn-

ing, I whispered to Constantine that here we rest for a whole day.

Indeed, just as we hurried out of Mawia we tarried in Ibb, and without shame in either case. For to hesitate to accept what is good for your health and comfort in Arabia and to flee as far as is possible the contrary, is to cut short your travels and, perhaps, your life. Of a certainty, shame is not the best companion of a traveller. I say this advisedly, although I have more than once experienced a sense of contrition—as, for instance, when we received a telegram from Saiyed Ali ibn'ul-Wazir, Commander of the Army at Mawia, saying that he was very sorry we had left so soon.

Ismail Ba-Salaamah wanted us to remain a week. But I would not expose the armour of travel, for more than a day, to the wasting effects of luxury—aye, even though my lord Ismail's cook be as good as his brother in the palace of the Sultan of Lahaj. It was the first time, in sooth, after leaving Lahaj, that I ate with relish. The soup was, of course, communal, but we all had spoons. The 'Amel's youngest son, a boy of six, thrust his little paw into the lamb like a man and pulled out savoury bits which he stowed away as quickly as the most edacious and efficient. Some of the 'Amel's retainers and hangers-on also ate with us, for his is a true and practical democracy.

Nor did he harangue on the Prophet and Al-Islam and invoke Allah's wrath upon the infidels and their lands, as did the Ameer at Mawia. I said that Ba-Salaamah is a Shaf'i Sunni, and that perhaps accounts for his tolerance and open-heartedness. On the other hand, there are human qualities which draw their sap from neither religion nor sectarianism ; and even though Ba-Salaamah were a tree-worshipper he would still be, I think, within loving distance of God and man.

After the supper we had the coffee-husk brew, which is very pleasant sugared, a *mada'ah*, and some excellent

*ghat*, grown in Ba-Salaamah's own gardens. What was served to us was not only fresh, just picked, but also of a rare quality. Sheikh Saleh, when the 'Amel's son threw a bunch at him, exclaimed: 'Of the bounty of Allah! There are people in Aden who would pay ten rupees for this.' The deeper we penetrate into the Yaman the more prevalent and the more extravagant becomes the use of *ghat*. I remained with my host till 1 a.m. that evening, did much of the talking myself, passed a sleepless night, and had a fit of indigestion the following day—all the result of two bunches of it.

In the morning Ba-Salaamah brought me a bunch of roses to offset, I mused, the effect of the 'emerald leaf,' and we had our bread and honey and then our *mada'ah* together. After which, he took us to one of his gardens, set in the groin of two hills, with very attractive terraces in half-circles. Here he cultivates the mango and the olive, the pomegranate and the peach, the date palm and the pear, and other tropic and semi-tropic fruits. For such is the nature of the place—14 degrees from the equator and 6,750 feet above the sea—that the mango and the olive can flourish side by side. The air is always dry, the climate is excellent, and it never snows.

Aside from the tertiary fever and smallpox—and *ghat*—there are no diseases. But the children, because of the *ghat*-habit, I think, are sickly looking, stunted and wan; out of a dozen, say, a man gets from his several wives, only a few live. Ba-Salaamah has ten, and he lost twelve.

There are no doctors and no drugs in Ibb. Many people came to me for quinine, and I was sorry I did not bring treble the quantity I had with me. 'What do you do,' I asked Abdullah, eldest son of Ba-Salaamah, 'when you are sick?' 'I await the mercy of Allah,' he replied. 'And what do you do with small-pox cases? Do you seclude the patients?' 'No. They to whom Allah would give the disease cannot escape it, even though the diseased one be removed from their midst.'

There are no schools in Ibb, except those of the mosques, where children are taught to read the Koran, and young men study the law and the Hadith to become *faqihs* (jurists). The *faqih* of Al-Yaman becomes as a rule a pedagogue, and, like pedagogues everywhere, he is the butt of parochial wit. The soldiers especially look down upon him, because he talks, they say, and does not fight.

One of these *faqihs* entertained us with stories about buried treasures in Al-Yaman. 'There is much, very much in the bosom of the earth. But every treasure is guarded, and the guardian—in Allah be our refuge!—attacks every one who comes to dig for the treasure, except the one in whose name it is kept. He has to seek it himself, and it opens to none but him.' The *faqih*, a man in the fifties, spoke with the earnest credulity of a child.

The architecture of Ibb, like everything else in it, is mediæval. The houses are built of stone, and from the outside they seem to be six or seven stories high. But they are not more than three; the other windows are those of the landings, while the living-floor has two sets, as a rule, one at the top for decoration, and another, about 10 feet under it, for light and air. In the best homes the top window is of coloured glass fitted in mouldings of arabesque design; while the one below is furnished with triple screens, that is, the outside lattice, the glass casement, and the shutters, which close from inside and darken the room. These low windows, the walls being very thick, look like alcoves and are often used as such. The roof-walls are crenellated, the prevailing design being a row of inverted 'V's connecting three-quarter circles—thus :—





THE GOVERNOR OF IBB WITH AMEEN RIHANI, THE  
AUTHOR.

To face page 52.





It is a picturesque city, very quaint and very dirty. Its 15,000 souls, together with their cattle and pack beasts, are crowded within its double four-gated wall ; and they were kept in subjection, during the days of the Turks, by a small garrison in a fort built outside the town, opposite the principal gate. The fort is now empty and dilapidated, but the people, except for their love of the Governor Ba-Salaamah, have not changed.

Once before in its history, however, Ibb was blessed with a benevolent ruler, who was of the veiled species—indeed, it enjoys the double distinction of having once been ruled, and benevolently ruled, by a woman. Saiyedah of happy memory, daughter of Ahmad'us-Sālahi, was particularly fond, it seems, of building roads. All the rocky highways of the *naghils*, with their broad steps of rough-hewn stone, were built in her days and in obedience of her word.

But the most important of her achievements, is the tunnel she had constructed for the people of Ibb to save them from thirst during a siege. An ingenious bit of engineering, this, which put the water, at the base of the hill, outside the city, beyond the reach of the enemy. For deep under the rivulet a moat was built into which the water flowed ; and from this moat the tunnel led up to the very heart of the city.

I said that Ibb is picturesque, whether the view is from above or below. Coming from Mawia, seen from Mt. Mahris in the glare of the sun, amidst the green fields and gently sloping hills, it is like a heap of pearl shells, fringed with moss, in a dried-up lake ; and to those who come from Yarim, it stands on the hilltop, in the shadow of Mt. Bu'dan, looking now like a fortress in a glade and now like ancient ruins on an island near the coast. Reminiscences of enchantment and beauty ! But I have also experienced the reality in Ibb, particularly on the morning of our departure, and the memory of it will ever remain with me. Generally speaking, there are no good

voices in Al-Yaman, and the cry of the muazzen is invariably atrocious. In Ibb, however, the first voice that greeted me in the early dawn—awoke me to an infinity of ineffable peace and love—was that of a muazzen, born in the lap of music, crying in the minaret, *Ya arham'urrahimin irhamna* (O thou most merciful, be thou merciful unto us) ! Another token of beauty, revealing the same spirit of loveliness and meekness that inspired the words of the muazzen and moulded his voice, was a bouquet of white and pink roses, which Ba-Salaamah brought with him when he came to say salaam and farewell.

He also walked with us to the other Ceremony Spot of Ibb, about thirty minutes down the hill—the welcome and farewell spot to those coming from or going to Yarim and beyond—accompanied by his sons, his servants and retainers, a squad of the soldiery, and those of the citizens who were up early and saw us file out of the city gate. There was a change and an increase also in our escort ; for the soldiers who came with us from Mawia had to return to their regiment, and Ba-Salaamah was not satisfied with less than thirty Indigos, commanded by a Turkish officer, to escort us to Zamar. We appreciated the courtesy, to be sure, but we dreaded the bakhsheesh.

We said farewell to our gracious host and continued down the hill to Wadi Sahoul, which is overgrown with odoriferous shrubs and plants. The fresh and scented air was most delicious ; and to me there was a special pleasure in recognizing a few familiar shrubs, as the jasmine, the clematis, the myrtle, and the elder, whose corymbs, so early in the season, were in bloom. Of trees, the acacia and the laurel abound ; the tamarisk, too, beloved of the poet and the camel—for its shade by the one and for its spinous foliage by the other. The cactus covers the slopes all around ; and the candelabrum variety, the tree-cactus, yields to the Yamani a sap, a gum, rather, when tapped, which, they say, becomes, in

the sun, like rubber. A tropic scene, indeed, without the heat of the tropics. And hark, to crown the reality, the howls of the monkeys ! I could have travelled a whole day in Wadi Sahoul without tiring.

But at noon we came to Mukhadir, a village of 5,000 souls, with as much pomp and indigo in its official reception as Mawia or Ibb ; and the 'Amel and his Qadi, who rode at the head of the procession, took us to a gloomy mud den for dinner. I had a fit of the sulks ; so comrade Constantine, to whom indigo blue and empty pomp were not so repugnant, had to do all the talking and the eating. I think they enjoyed his stories about King Husein's aeroplanes, even as he enjoyed their awful mess of rice and mutton.

But Mukhadir was a cowry in a rosary of amber, a brumagem in a set of jade, an indigo-blue smock in a wardrobe of Nature's best. For an hour after we left the place, while Mt. Hubaish dotted white with houses was still to our left in the distance, we turned into another beautiful wadi, the most beautiful, in fact, we had yet traversed. Richer than Wadi Sahoul in its coppices, more fertile than Wadi'z-Zahab in its fields and gardens, Wadi Marfid boasts of a perennial stream which comes down in a tumbling rivulet from Mt. Samarah. Here, too, are trees from southern and northern zones—mango and banana groves, orange gardens, the walnut and the almond, the apricot and the peach—and, for the first time since we left Aden, we behold here the coffee tree.

Wadi Marfid, which takes its name from the village on the hilltop to our right, and which is about the same height as the city of Ibb, yields three crops a year. People were both sowing and reaping when we passed through it ; reaping the winter wheat and sowing corn for the summer harvest. I forgot the squalidness of Mukhadir, and even the luxury of Ibb, while going through this Wadi, which we traversed in two hours ; and we ate of its delicious bananas and sweet limes near the rivulet, at the

foot of Mt. Samarah, before ascending the *naghil*, which is steeper and much higher than that of Saiyanah.

A little after sunset we reached Manzil, a village half-way up the mountain, where we passed the night. I was glad we arrived unheralded and unnoticed at the *samsarah*, although the proprietor charged us one five shillings for a dozen boiled eggs and a dozen cakes of bread, which at Saiyanah we got for five pence. He must have been charging also for the quiet reception, or perhaps for the privilege of an extraordinary military escort. The 'Amels of the Imam must enjoy the use of his single telegraph wire, for two officials from Yarim came riding on donkeys to Manzil to meet us ; two old codgers who said salaam, gazed at us silently for an hour, and went back in the night. They had been sent, I suppose, by the reception committee to find out where we were and at what hour we would reach the city.

Early in the morning we continued our ascent of the *naghil* up to the summit of Mt. Samarah, which is 10,005 feet above the sea. There was a strong north wind, which continued to blow till we reached the top of the mountain, a distance of an hour's ride, and for the first time in Al-Yaman I had to use my heavy *aba*. It was uncomfortably cold. But when we started down the other *naghil*, which is as steep as the one we had just ascended, the wind subsided, and by the time we had reached the plain, a little less than 1,000 feet below, the sun was that of Al-Yaman again and the heat was depressing. This plain, called Qa'ul-Haql, is well cultivated, and its squares of green and yellow and bronze denote the different crops—one in the seed, one in the blade, and the third ready for harvesting. For a stretch of about fifteen miles we ride through these fields, till we reach, in the afternoon, a Humyar ruin called Maryama, which is the ancient name and site of the present Yarim.

At Maryama we were received by the same crowd of officials and indigo soldiers, who were sent by the Sheikh

in obedience to an order from the 'Amel of Zamar. The Sheikh himself did not appear in the show or after. But there was another one, a wizened, red-bearded, bleary-eyed, heavy-turbaned *faqih*, who stood at the head of a line of children and lifted, as we approached, his hand. The word Allah in his opening gibberish was all I could understand. But the children then raised their voice in hideous strains, out of which shot, like sky-rockets, two other recognisable words or rhymes, *i.e.*, Muslemin and the *mujahid* (crusader) Ameen. I do not know how I felt then, and I do not presume to tell you now. But I was a *mujahid* in the sense that I was always fighting the infidel Punchinello in me.

Not for this reason, however, do I mention this special feature of the reception at Yarim. The fifty odd boys, whom the *faqih* had brought out to welcome us, are hostages of the Imam, and they justify this digressive paragraph. I had heard of the hostages in Lahaj and I was incredulous. That the Imam Yahya exacted a son or a brother of every official, military and civil, in his service, as a guaranty of honesty and loyalty, I doubted. But fact often puts fiction in the shade; and here in Yarim we are met by a few of the hostages which insure the safety of the Perfect State of the Imam. There are 4,000, I was told, of these boy-captives, all living away from their homes. The hostages of Yarim, for instance, are sent to San'a, those of San'a to Ibb, those of Ibb to Zamar, etc. Some of them under military surveillance are taught to read and write; others are incarcerated; while a few, under satisfactory bail, are allowed to circulate freely in the town of their captivity.

The Imam rules, to be sure, with an iron hand, and there is no apparent opposition. But in one of the *samsaraks* on our way we asked for milk. 'We have nor cows nor sheep,' said the proprietor. 'Nor anyone to herd them, if we had. The 'Amels of the Imam take our cattle (in taxation) and our young men run away to

escape the army.' This is the discordant note, and we shall hear more of it as we go on. Meanwhile, the boy captives are singing to the Mujahid Ameen, who, for the glory of the Image of Perfection at San'a, would see them all free and back in their homes.

The Sheikh of Yarim, an official who strictly follows instructions, did not, as I said, come to see us. Evidently it was not 'nominated in the bond.' But he had us received officially (I suspect that his own grievance against the Imam was subtly expressed when he sent the hostages also to meet us) ; he had us lodged and fed, and one of his men told us that we were free to leave whenever we liked. We did leave an hour before dawn the following day.

But we were glad he had us lodged in the heart of the town, thus affording us a close view of a certain feature of the life of the people. The house was that of a man who had something to do with the Government, catered, I think, for it ; and his wife and her niece, who cooked for us the supper, were neither invisible nor veiled. But the face of the girl was pocked and that of her aunt was once attractive. Now, an hour after our arrival, the niece, who had evidently changed her dirty pijama, but still wore her short tattered smock, came stealthily across the roof and, standing at the door, asked me for some money to buy a new garment. I was writing my notes of the day and I put her off. But again towards evening, when all the soldiers were downstairs, she came sidling to the door as usual and motioned with her forefinger. 'What do you wish,' I asked. 'Give me a *real*,' she replied, pointing again to her torn smock, 'and I will come to you to-night.' I gave her a few shillings and told her to go to see my companion about the other half of the proposition. But Captain Yanni, who was nosing about in the house, told me later, when I spoke of the girl, that her aunt had approached him with the same complaint and purpose.

Before leaving in the morning, I gave the master and the servants of the two Lilliths, whose story I here relate as a prelude to what we shall hear in Zamar, what I thought was a good bakhsheesh. But they were not satisfied. They looked grudgingly at each other, the one wishing he had received the bakhsheesh of his fellow, thinking it to be more than his, and then at us, whining and begging. What a difference, I thought, between the Hawashib Arabs and these Zioud. 'Is not the Sheikh going to pay you?' I asked our host. 'The Government,' he replied, 'pays no one for lodging and feeding the soldiers of the Imam.' 'But we are not soldiers,' I parried. 'You are going to the Imam,' he persisted, 'to teach his soldiers how to fight. You are *nazam* (regular soldiers) in disguise.' This, one of the many rumours about our mission, was new, and I gave him an extra bakhsheesh for it. The Zaidi poor are the most beggarly and most unclean of the slaves of Allah; and the well-to-do are given to vainglory and ostentation.

The distance of twenty miles, between Yarim and Zamar, we covered in seven hours, but it can be made in six, in five, in four. Apropos of this, Sheikh Saleh told us the story of a traveller on horseback who asked a farmer how long it would take him to reach Zamar. The farmer did not reply. The traveller asked again. No reply. A third time he asked, but in vain. Whereupon, he spurred his horse in anger and trotted away. "'At that pace,' cried out the farmer, 'you will get there in three hours.' The traveller reined his horse and asked him why he did not say so at first. "'I did not know,' he replied, 'at what pace you were going.'"

There are no towns on the way between Yarim and Zamar, and the ground is mostly rocky and barren. But where there is soil, there is cultivation. At one place we saw people threshing the winter wheat, and around the Biblical threshing-floor was the spring crop in the ear. It will be borne in mind that Al-Yaman is



within the fringe of the monsoon rains, and the soil in certain places, like the district of Ta'iz, yields, I was told, even four crops a year.

About noon we sighted the white city of Zamar, which is surrounded by a double semicircle of hills delicately etched against a sky of azure blue ; and in the glare of the sun it looked like a barren island in a sea of green foam. Now and then, in the stir of the breeze, it glowed like a mirage.

The usual reception, only on a larger scale, a mile outside the city. For Saiyed Abdullah ibn'ul-Wazir, who is both 'Amel and Ameer'ul-Jaish of the Lewa of San'a, sent out a company of his regulars and another of the volunteers—their indigo uniform is the same—together with a number of nobles and a multitude of citizens, to welcome us in his name. They beat the drums, and blew the bugles, and sang the national anthem, while two Indigo Devils, each brandishing two shining daggers, leaped ahead of the procession, turning in the air, making frantic gestures, and uttering wild unintelligible syllables. It was rollicking. But the nobles, in their Brobdingnagian turbans and puffed sleeves, were very impressive. They made their horses prance in the press and crush, and even perform a pirouette. We on our old jaded mules certainly looked cheap. But the moody Sheikh Saleh tried to console me. 'All this,' he said, 'is for the man on the mule.' 'For you, too,' I added. 'I am an ass on a mule,' he mumbled. 'I should have gone back from Mawia to my family.' I think he was tired of the military show like myself, and I was eager, for his sake, to get to San'a as soon as possible.

That is why I insisted on seeing the 'Amel and Commander the day we arrived. It was Friday and his *majlis* was full of people ; but he consented to receive us in the evening. After we had rested in the guest-house, therefore, and had our supper, we walked into the darkness of the second city in the Upper Yaman (20,000 including



HIMYARITE STATUETTE.  
Excavated in the Lower Yaman.

To face page 60.



the Ghetto<sup>1</sup>), accompanied by a squad of the soldiery, one of whom carried a lantern, and, coming to the citadel, we went through the same military formalities as those of Mawia. The Saiyed Abdullah ibn'ul-Wazir is cousin to the Saiyed Ali, and the two Commanders have much in common. They are both eloquent speakers, both fanatical, both vainglorious.

We found Saiyed Abdullah seated in the centre of a long, low diwan, with a silver tray, set on a little table, cluttered with papers before him. He is a man in the eighth lustrum, hawk-eyed and soft-mouthed, with fair skin and a fiery expression. He offered his hand to us without standing or even half-rising to feign politeness. Those that were present also remained seated and impassive. But the man on his right, who shaved his chin and cultivated side-whiskers, had a malign look, and among those who sat further down, however, I caught the eye of one who seemed to vibrate with a little sympathy. Saiyed Abdullah, like his cousin Saiyed Ali, opened the conversation with a flourish of piety and militant zeal.

'Allah and Al-Islam ! With his sword Muhammad ibn Abdullah conquered the world for Allah and Al-Islam. Believe in Allah and you can accomplish anything. Be true to Al-Islam and you never shall fail. We in Al-Yaman believe in Allah and are true to Al-Islam. We are also fighting to uphold and to spread the word of Al-Islam : we follow the Prophet in word and deed. We do what we say ; others say, but do not do, or they do not do what they say. Their word is good, but their deed is evil. They are base and lying Arabs. They prefer the gold of the foreigner to the Jihad. We fought the Turks, and we fought the heretics and traitors of Tihama,<sup>2</sup> and we will fight any Power that attempts to usurp our rights or injure our sovereignty. We will fight unto death. Defeated in the plain—Allah forbend !—we retreat to the

<sup>1</sup> About the Jews of Al-Yaman, see Chapter XVII., *The Ghetto*.

<sup>2</sup> The Idrisi and his Shaf'i followers.

mountains ; defeated in the mountains, we retreat to the desert ; and if we have left us but the ground under our feet, we will fight unto death, believing in Allah and trusting in Allah and the Prophet. . . . Where is Faisal to-day ? ”

‘ In Al-Iraq,’ I replied, ‘ he is King of Al-Iraq.’

‘ What good and what honour is there in being an Arab King under the command of the English ? It were better for Faisal had he gone to Ibn Sa’oud and tried to make peace between him and his father Husein. King Husein ! Another Arab King whose reins are in the hands of the English. The paring of the nail of the Imam were better, *wallah !* than such a king and such a Muslem. For shame ! For shame ! To open the doors of the Kaaba to the infidel Nasara.’

The rumour circulated by some of the enemies of King Husein that Christians were allowed to enter into Mecca is false. I said so to Saiyed Abdullah, but his rancour did not subside.

‘ They are base Arabs,’ he continued, ‘ mercenaries and liars. And there is no hope and no salvation for them except they become like the people of Al-Yaman. But they cannot do so unless their Ameers follow the example of the Imam. Here is our Government—a perfect Government. No corruption, no bribery, no favouritism, no injustice, no tyranny. Here is our land—the best of the land of Allah, and the most free. No crimes, no usury, no stealing, no prostitution, no wine, no adultery. Only by following our example can the Arabs in other parts achieve their freedom and rise to a place of honour among the Muslemin.’

Saiyed Abdullah spoke in a loud piping voice, and his eyes were aflame with fanaticism. He, too, like his cousin at Mawia, was under the impression that I was a Muslem. My silence was Islamic, and under the circumstances, after hearing such a harangue, I might have assumed the rôle. But when he said that there was no prostitution in Al-

Yaman and no adultery, Captain Yanni nudged me and was about to say something himself on the subject had I not assumed, knowing his tactlessness, the lead in the conversation. Indeed, I know not where the recklessness and daredevilry of Constantine would have led us to, were it not for the eye I kept upon his step and the finger upon his lips. Nevertheless, he spoke of the Yarim episode to one of the soldiers, who replied nonchalantly : 'And had you not had a Saiyed with you (I was the Saiyed), women would have come to you in every *samsarah*.'

Coming out of the citadel, I was told that on a second meeting I would find Saiyed Abdullah more kind and sympathetic. He had to be the Ameer at the first interview—the Ameer of the army, whose principal official *rôle* is to defend Al-Islam and laud the Muslemin. I did not have the pleasure of a second meeting ; but before leaving Zamar on the following morning I received a telegram from the 'Amel of Ibb, our kind host Ismail Ba-Salaamah, expressing his regret that we had left his city so soon and wishing us a safe and comfortable journey to San'a.

To San'a ! And let us hope that we shall meet more Ismails and less Ameers on our way. Even some of the soldiers in our Zamar escort shared this sentiment. One of them told me that the high-sounding title of Ameer'ul-Jaish was equivalent to major. He knows, for he has served in four different armies ; he fought with the Italians in Tripoli, with the English in India, with the Turks in Al-Yaman—and he was then a sergeant in the indigo blue army of the Imam.

'I was taken from Aden by a ruse. There was a war between the Turks and the Infidels, I was told, and I went. But when I arrived at Tripoli I found myself among the Infidels and I could not escape. I had to fight, Allah forgive me, against my brother Muslems. But I was treated very kindly and paid well. I like the

Italians better than the Ingliz, who are crazy about the regulations. The Turks don't care about the regulations, but they don't pay. And now, Effendi,' he came nearer to my mule and continued in a whisper, 'no regulations, no pay, and no kind words. The Imam himself is a good man, but his *'ummal* (officials) are always hungry for *zalat* (money). We get five reals (\$2.50) a month—when it is paid. But we are sent from one end of Al-Yaman to another without a *halala* (copper piece) in our pockets. The people do not like us, and they do not feed and lodge us unless we pay. But what have we to pay? See this,' pointing to his tunic, 'I have to buy it myself, and it has to last me a whole year. And I have to cover my skin with the dye to keep warm in the winter. We are a poor people in Al-Yaman and the Government of the Imam is adding to our misery.'

Among our escort was a boy of sixteen, who had already been six years in the army. 'They first gave me a stick and a dagger,' said Abdullah, who was married, 'and made me carry messages from one Ameer to another.' 'And where is your wife?' I asked. 'Beyond that mountain,' he replied, snapping his fingers to denote distance. He had not seen her for a year. 'But I shall not go back to her, *billah!* until I have some *zalat* in my pocket.' Whereupon one of his fellow soldiers: 'Poor one, she will die before seeing thee.'

Another one of our escort, who carried a complaint concealed, was a man of about, I thought, fifty years. He even looked older. But, 'By the Prophet, I am only thirty. This,' pointing to his grey beard, 'is from this,' pointing to his heart. '*Haza min haza.*' He said nothing else. His sorrow, whether from love, or from a loss, or from the army, I could not fathom. I asked what seemed an impertinent question, which he answered by saying, as he lifted his head and hand to heaven: 'Allah is all-knowing.' Were it not for his aged look, his sorrow would not have been betrayed. They are very stoic, these

people. They suffer, and endure, and even sing when on the march.

‘ O Comforter of souls in pain,  
O God, our chains destroy !  
Open the doors which closed remain,  
The captive’s dream employ.  
For why should some in grief be slain  
And some live in their joy ? ’

Holding each other’s hand, they marched slowly, solemnly, as they chanted these lines ; and then fitting the step to the rhythm, they ambled to the following :

‘ The garment is old,  
The sandals are torn ;  
But the Father of Gold  
Naked is born.  
And the wonder, behold !  
The rose and the thorn  
Are both in the fold  
Of the garb of the morn.’

Little or nothing did I understand while they were running and trolling these rhymes, but with the aid of Saiyed Muhammad, who is a scholar, I was able to write down at the *samsarah* a few of their songs, which are in the native dialect. Saiyed Muhammad is the sympathetic gentleman we first met at the *majlis* of the Ameer. He travelled with us to San’a, and he begged me not to say that he helped me in transcribing the songs of the soldiers.

The Zioud are by nature very secretive—and suspicious. They would question the rise of the sun, and whisper of it to you, if it were not a daily occurrence. Saiyed Muhammad took me aside in the *samsarah* at Ma’bar to ask me why the water kept cold in the thermos bottle. I explained to him the principle of a vacuum, making an illustration of the double glass wall, and he was astounded. ‘ The people of Europe,’ he said, ‘ are more ingenious than we are. They use their minds always. We use our mind only when we fight. . . . I am going to travel some day.



. . . I shall go out of Al-Yaman disguised as a merchant. Our people think that there is nothing but irreligion and immorality outside of our country. It is difficult, therefore, especially for the *Sadat*,<sup>1</sup> to leave Al-Yaman. But some day I shall travel in the world.'

I wrote my address at his request on a piece of paper, which he folded carefully and then concealed it in one of the folds of his turban. 'This will remain a secret between us, and when we arrive at San'a, you will go to the *madhif* and I will go to my house. We shall not see each other there.' Saying which, he brushed one palm against the other. 'It is better thus.'

Ma'bar, a mud village in the plain of Jahran, is six hours' ride from Zamar and ten times that distance from pomp and glory. No bugle, no drum, no indigo soldiers. But there was, nevertheless, a unique reception at the *samsarah*—unique in the ensemble, if not in the variety. For we have been welcomed before, at different places, by the bugs and the fleas and the other things that bite—by tarantulas, too, and scorpions. But only at Ma'bar did we have the pleasure of meeting them all under a single roof. The wise Saiyed Muhammad, who carried his own coffee cup in a little wicker case with him, had also a sleeping bag, and he did not worry. But I saw Constantine pacing the roof in the night, and I found, when I was dressing, a tarantula in one of my boots. There are other creeping things, however, which cannot be so easily shaken out or off. As a photograph of a traveller's state of mind on the spot, I transcribe from my notebook the following :

An unspeakable tolerance one achieves in a journey of this kind. But I am told that there are public baths in San'a, and that affords me, even at a distance, some relief. And what about fumigation? Visions of the Quarantine at Tor rise before me. I am on my knees

<sup>1</sup> Plural of Saiyed.

penning these words to Civilisation—Civilisation, praise be to Science thy god ! and to Hygiene thy prophet ! But where are we to find them in the land of the Zioud ? I am writing this after eight hours on a jaded mule in the fastnesses of the Yaman hills ; and in spite of the broiling sun and the fatigue, I wish we were still on the march. There is nothing more depressing and more repulsive to me than walls and roofs in this once happy land.

Wastah, in the plain of Jahran, is a town of rich land-owners who lease their estates to Ma'bar farmers, on a basis of three to one. That is, the owner gets one quarter of the proceeds of the crops, while the farmer, who is called partner, gets three. But the owner's portion is untaxable.

Leaving Ma'bar, we continue through the richly cultivated plain, passing many *sakiehs* on the way, and, coming to its end, we start on the ascent of the *naghil* of Yaslih, whose top is about 1,000 feet above cultivation. The mountain itself is barren, but the view from the summit, as we look back, recalls that of Qa'ul-Haql from Mt. Samarah. Beyond the cultivated fields are the purple hills, partly in haze, partly in deep shadow, scrawled with pastels, as it were, upon the horizon.

Descending the alternate *naghil*, we met a muleteer carrying a load of apricots from San'a to sell in Zamar. He was happy to find a moving market, as happy, perhaps, as we were in the delicious fruits. Nor did he have to continue to the city. We gave him good payment for the load and incorporated him and his mule into our caravan. The soldiers applauded the deal, and Sheikh Saleh said : ' Allah, send us also a load of *ghat*.'

We were now going through Wadi Khabbah, which is the hottest and, I was told, the coldest spot in the Upper Yaman. It is a narrow wadi, with high walls on either side, in which are openings—gorges—for the play of the winds in winter. That is why, I think, it is very cold.

But there was not a breeze when we passed through it, and the heat was intense.

It did not prevent Ahmad, however, he who served in all the armies of the world, from continuing to speak his mind. There is, it seems, 'something rotten' in the State of the Imam. 'When the Dowlah was in Al-Yaman, Effendi, the Imam was good and just and merciful. He did not tax the people, except when he needed money. But now, when there is no Dowlah, he presses the yoke very hard upon our necks, and makes us give up everything to Bait'ul-Mal (Government Store). How much there is in Bait'ul-Mal—*khairat* (untold wealth)! . . . How many Bait's has the Imam? One in every city, and every one is full of wheat and corn and coffee and everything. But the people of Al-Yaman, except the Sadat, have nothing. If I opened my stomach every day, as I should, what I get from the Government would not serve me five days. And who is to pay for the *ghat*? We have nothing, Effendi. The Sadat have everything. The Sadat are tyrants and misers. They treat the people as if they were *qorash* (pack beasts). Here is one of them; he is a *tambal* (lazy looper). I am not walking with him, but with you. Yet, you see, he makes me carry his shoes.'

Saiyed Muhammad's shoes pinched. So he took them off coming down the *naghil* and made Ahmad carry them.

'And yesterday, Effendi, when the man in the *samsarah* refused to open the door for him, you remember, he ordered us to break it. I did not obey his order; he is not my commander. Were it not for the Sadat, Effendi, the Imam would be good and Al-Yaman would be happy.'

The Saiyeds (Sadat), of whom there are about 6,000, are the nobility, the feudal lords of Al-Yaman, and the Imam, their head, has to keep them on his side and under his control. He humours them, therefore, and often lets them do as they please. But they join the army like the common people and fight with them side by side.

At the *samsarah* of Khādir, which is a little beyond Wadi Khabbah, we met one of these soldier-Saiyeds, a mustacheless but bearded young man, wearing the heavy white turban of his class, which was adorned with a bunch of roses. He spoke in a cultured accent, telling us of the war they waged against the Arabs of Dhale', which was one of the British Protectorates. 'We were 2,000, and we had one cannon. We killed twenty-three of the enemy and we lost five of our men. . . . Yes, the *taiyara* (aeroplane) came and threw two bombs at us. But we read the *Fatihah* (opening chapter of the Koran) against it, and she straightway disappeared.'

This young Saiyed, whose faith in the supernatural power of the *Fatihah* is shared by most of his people, was of a mature and active mind. His talk on *ghat* and its injurious effects proved it. But when it comes to religion, they are all alike, the Zioud ; their faith is fantastic, their credulity is child-like, and their fanatical zeal is unappeasable.

Passing under Khādir, which is built on the hilltop among the cliffs, on the shelves and in niches of the rocks, and looks from a little distance as if it were a part of them—even the villages here, like the birds, take on the colour of their surroundings in self-defence—we come in two hours to Wa'lan, whose Sheikh and Qadi, on prancing steeds, together with the few soldiers they had and the few citizens who were willing or curious, welcomed us quietly outside the town.

The Sheikh slew a sheep for us. A sheep ! With the exception of an insufferably spiced meal at Zamar, I had been living, since we left Ibb, on milk and eggs, and my carnivorousness was clamorous. But I was also sick of boiled lamb, and I would save a leg from the bubbling water. Sheikh Saleh, in whose ear I whispered my purpose, allied himself with me, offering his dagger ; and soon I was cutting into small pieces the rosy leg of lamb. But something else was necessary, and again I whispered

into the ear of my friend. He wondered what I was going to do with his gun. I know nothing about firearms, never having used or carried any. But I had seen him the day before draw a rod from his old gun, a matchlock, with which to beat his mule. I drew out that rod, stuck the meat on it, and in a few minutes—the fire was in full blaze—we had *shish-kebab*, lamb on the skewer.

Saiyed Muhammad liked it, too, and he said again, in a whisper: 'I shall travel in the world some day.' Later he asked me what I wrote in my book. Having asked him a few questions on the road, I replied: 'What I have learned from you.' 'And of what good are the names of plants and flowers and wadis?' 'If I put them down in a book, they might be of help to some other traveller.'

He seemed convinced, but he followed me to the terrace-roof and said, smiling wistfully: 'We have been together now, how long?' 'Two days,' I replied. 'Three days to-morrow morning,' he specified. 'Will you permit me to ask a question?' I told him that he needed no permission, but I would like to know first if he was going to San'a on his own private business or was he charged by the Ameer Abdullah to accompany us. He was not direct in his reply. His home is in San'a, and he was returning on the following month, but the Ameer asked him to change his plan and come with us as a mark of honour.

'And now tell me, O Ameen, what is your purpose in visiting Al-Yaman.'

'To see the country and write a book about it.'

'There is another purpose.'

'Yes. The people of Al-Yaman to-day are where their ancestors were a thousand years ago, and I hope that the Imam will do something to help them out of that distant past. I shall tell him this and ask him to establish schools at least in the country.'

'*Nahi* (good). I am of your opinion. And I swear by Allah and by the light of this setting sun that I am your friend. Will you not tell me, therefore, if the Ingliz covet our land?'

'I do not know. I may be right if I said no or yes.'

'Are you not the envoy of the Ingliz to the Imam?'

'I am not the envoy of any Power in the world. I have nothing to do with politics. But I will tell you this : as a lover of Arabia and the Arabs, I would like to see the rulers of the country stop fighting each other. I would like to see them all unite in a common cause and for the good of themselves and their people.'

'*Nahi*. But how can they unite? I tell you this : the Imam is a great man, the greatest Arab ruler to-day, and his ambition is to rule over all Al-Yaman and then over all Arabia.'

'He may be the right man to head an Arab Federation, but that is not my business. When they get together, the ruling Ameers, they can decide the matter among themselves.'

'But how are they to get together? And where? And who is going to call them to a conference?'

'My dear Saiyed, you say and you believe that I have a message for the Imam. Don't you think, therefore, that I ought to reserve something for his own ear?'

He smiled and said : 'The words of a wise man. But I will tell you something about our people, which you do not know. You have complained of the gloomy rooms, the low roofs, and the small windows of our dwellings. If you travel in Asir, you will find the houses there gloomier, the roofs lower and the windows only as big as this,' he held his two thumbs and two forefingers in a circle. 'Do you know why? I will tell you. Our people are still primitive—barbarians still. They live in fear, and doubt, and suspicion. In Asir'—he jumped to his feet and brought down his rifle from the peg in the

wall—‘in Asir the men sleep like this.’ He lay on his side with the rifle between his legs and arms. ‘They live in fear, and not only of the stranger or the foreigner, but also of each other. They are like the brutes, ever suspicious of approach, ever ready to leap. And here in Al-Yaman, they are always fighting against each other. You have seen them—they are all armed. They fight, the people of Al-Yaman, on the slightest provocation. What, for instance, is the value of this,’ taking up the straw case of his coffee cup. ‘This is a trifle. But it is mine, and my right to it I will defend, if necessary, with this *jambiyah* (dagger). That is the way of the people of Al-Yaman. We tolerate no trespassing—not the slightest usurpation of our rights. If a quarrel between two families in this village, for instance, results in a fight, and they start shooting from their houses at each other, the inhabitants will immediately take sides with one or the other party and begin firing their guns. After the battle, they ask what it is about. That is the way of the people of Al-Yaman. They will fight—it is their nature—on the slightest provocation. They will fight even against their kinsmen, to defend their rights or to maintain the pledge of an ally. My brother was killed by his son. If this is our way with our own people, what would it be with the foreigner?’

‘Is there anyone in Al-Yaman to-day who desires the return of the Turks?’

‘No; and if there be, we would slay him.’

‘Is there any Batinis (secret Muslem sects) in Al-Yaman?’

‘There was once, but we exterminated them by the sword.’

‘Is that the way of the people of Al-Yaman?’

‘Yes, Ya Ameen. The people of Al-Yaman are jealous of their country, even as they are of their harim, and we will always fight for the honour of both.’

Saiyed Muhammaḍ here excused himself, and taking

off his long white sash, whose edges are barred in yellow and green, he spread it on the ground, not far from me, and began to say his sunset prayer. I stood leaning against the terrace wall, facing him. He said the opening chapter and then knelt and prayed in a low but

## TIME SCHEDULE OF JOURNEY FROM ADEN TO SAN'A

	Hour	Day	Mile
From Aden to Lahaj, by rail . . .			20
Lahaj to Dukaim, by automobile . . .			20
Dukaim to Khundoq, by mule . . .	3		
Khundoq to Musiamir . . . . .	3	1st	
Musiamir to Duraijah . . . . .	4		
Duraijah to Mawia . . . . .	4	2nd	
Mawia to Humairah . . . . .	3		
Humairah to Sheikh Salah . . . . .	3	3rd	
Sheikh Salah to Saiyanah . . . . .	3	4th	
Saiyanah to Ibb . . . . .	4		
Remained a day at Ibb . . . . .		5th	
Ibb to Mukhadir . . . . .	6		
Mukhadir to Manzil . . . . .	3	6th	
Manzil to Yarim . . . . .	6	7th	
Yarim to Zamar . . . . .	7	8th	
Zamar to Ma'bar . . . . .	6	9th	
Ma'bar to Kāhdir . . . . .	5		
Kāhdir to Wa'lan . . . . .	2	10th	
Wa'lan to Haziaz . . . . .	4		
Haziaz to San'a. . . . .	2	11th	
	68	12	

At an average of 3 miles an hour

204

244

audible voice. After which he rose, repeated the Fatihah, and then something from another chapter in the Koran about the blazing fire of hell and the all-knowingness of Allah. He knelt again and said another prayer; again he rose and repeated in a higher and chanting voice some verses in which the infidels are scourged—and those who conceal in their hearts aught against Al-Islam.



. . . O thou discoverer of secrets and thou reader of hearts, enfold the Muslemin in thy protection and chastise the enemies of the Muslemin."

I put up my cot later in the very place he prayed and slept in my boots with an untroubled conscience, under the roof I like best.

## CHAPTER VII

### SAN'A

I WANTED no more scorpions in my clothes, so I kept them on when I slept on the terrace roof at Wa'an. But about one after midnight I woke up shivering—the cold had bitten me through the boots—and I heard the sound of chatter and laughter. My companions in their cubby-holes were still awake and evidently not worrying about the bleak night. I envied them. I got up and joined them. Saiyed Muhammad, Captain Yanni and Sheikh Saleh were still chewing *ghat* and telling Jinn stories. 'There are more treasures under the houses of San'a than in them,' I heard Sheikh Saleh saying, as I entered, 'but they are all guarded by the Jinn.' The little room was comfortably warm, but the *ghat* atmosphere was suffocating.

I walked into the adjoining room, where the soldiers were smoking their *mada'ahs* and cursing the Saiyeds. 'Al-Yaman would be a paradise without the Sadat,' Ahmad was saying. 'Of a certainty,' assented Abdullah. 'And the Imam would be the happiest man, for he would have all the *zalat* himself.' Abdullah ibn Ali, the boy husband, who would not go back to his wife until he had some *zalat* in his pocket, then entertained us with a love song, the refrain of which is quite modern, when instead of *zalat* and *ghat* we read 'money' and 'dope.'

'What is love without *zalat* ?

And what is life without the *ghat* ?'

But Saiyed Muhammad objected to the singing, and told the soldiers to get up and dress, for we had to leave at that hour that we may reach San'a before the heat of

noon. They were still in their faded tunics, which they wore on the road ; but that we were soon to enter ' the greatest city in the world,' they unfolded their holiday garments, with the puffed sleeves, the dye of which was still deep and fresh, and started to dress. A couple of yards of cotton cloth, unbleached or dyed a lighter shade, they wind around their waists and let fall to the knee ; they then take up its ends in front and tuck them in an angle under the belt, from which hangs a chatelaine. Yes, this Zaidi soldier, whose fierce and fanatical spirit moves gracefully in feminine guise, who slings the bandolier across his shoulder and paints his eyes with *kohl*, wears also a chatelaine, which hangs from the hilt of his dagger, and to which are attached his seal, his ink-well, his *kohl*-vial of filigreed silver, a scissor, a knife and a pincette. After dressing, they sat down to paint their eyes, and one of them, having cut his foot during the day, strew some of the contents of his *kohl*-vial upon his wound. The antimony powder is also good for sores.

We left Wa'lan two hours before dawn, in a moonlight that was pale and a cold that was penetrating. Considering that we were only 15 degrees north of the equator, it was incredibly cold, but we were also at an altitude of 7,500 feet, and in a table-land surrounded by a wall of lofty summits and towering peaks, the air being, therefore, unqualified as either a radiator or a cooling medium. It is, indeed, too dry to either retain at night or modify in the day any of the heat of the sun.

A raw morning, we say in the States ; a cold that slays, they say in Al-Yaman. No wonder they dread it, and put on whatever they can get as an armour against it. From a sack coat to a frock coat, and anything else between—every variety and every degree of misfit—oily and patched and buttonless garments bought at the dealer in fripperies in Aden or acquired many years ago in the service of the Turks—a baggy swallow-tailed coat held tight around the body by a cartridge belt, an over-

coat, by a sash, a sack coat, by a cord of camel hair—all these have I seen on the road to San'a covering the back of soldier and Saiyed and cameleer.

Ahmad wore over his uniform that morning a swallow-tailed coat, which still had a button at the back and another at the front ; he did not, therefore, have to wear his bandolier over it. The soldier near him wore a sack coat that came down to his knees, while Abdullah's armour against the thing that slays was a woman's winter garment of the 'nineties—a plaited jacket, with three plaits expanding from the waist down. It was amusing to see this 'little girl' of Al-Yaman in a London garment older than 'herself,' with a rifle on 'her' shoulder and a dagger at 'her' side, tramping barefoot beside my mule ; and it was pathetic to see 'her' lay down the rifle to blow in 'her' hands.

I, too, had to walk and blow in my hands to keep warm, and we were all very happy at sunrise. For, soon after, Ahmad doffed his swallow-tailed luxury and tied it with the sleeves, around his waist, saying : 'Allah makes the best coats for the people of Al-Yaman. Aye, *billah*, the sun upon my back is the best.' An hour later, after traversing a rocky region, we were on a white road, which shone between cultivated fields, where the Yaman farmer was early at work, and where the rope of the *saqiah* was being drawn by the donkey, the camel, and—in one place we passed—by two women.

After shivering from the cold before sunrise that morning, we ate our breakfast at nine o'clock in the shadow of a wall at Hazyaz to escape the sun. That is a feature of the climate of the Upper Yaman.

There is a *samsarah* and a few huts at Hazyaz, but from it we get a view of Mt. Benu Matar, which produces the best coffee bean in Al-Yaman, and Mt. Luqom which casts its shadow at the feet of the biggest city, not only in Al-Yaman, but in all Arabia. An hour after we leave Hazyaz, going in the direction of Luqom to our right, we

behold the tapering minarets of that city enveloped in the glare of the sun ; and soon the city itself, like a clutter of white cliffs, extending east by west, is silhouetted before us. The heat was getting intense ; the noonday glare quivered like quicksilver ; and the outlines of the white domes were not distinct until we had reached the granges in the suburbs.

Twelve days of back-breaking travel, and here is San'a to make us forget them. San'a, the city of a bookman's dream, the dream of a poet's love ! San'a, once the queen city of the world, says History ; once the sun of genius, says Learning ; once the capital of the Jinn, says Mythology. How often, with book in hand and a taper's flickering light, have I adventured through thy labyrinths, and stood gaping near thy treasures, and flirted with the Jinn in thy gardens, and heard the poets in thy palaces chant their rhymes.

It was then the dream ; it is now the reality, which is not disenchanting. For here are the lofty palaces—History spoke the truth ; and here is an Arab beauty dowered by Nature and favoured of Allah—the Poet did not exaggerate ; and there, within those walls, are many libraries in MS.—Learning is upheld. As for treasures and magic places, the names themselves were sufficient to justify Mythology and Tradition. Imaginary names—names of beautiful Jinn and Afrits of beneficent charm—methought they were, but they, too, are realities as real as Ahmad and Abdullah of our escort. For did we not ascend the *naghil* of Saiyan, and traverse Wadi Nahlan, and sleep in Yarim and Wa'lan, and rest in the shadow of Bu'dan ? And are we not now approaching the Palace Ghamdan ?

No, San'a is not disenchanting. Unlike other cities, the nearer one gets to it the more powerful is its spell. Beautifully, uniquely situated, its atmosphere is like an Arab poet's fancy, crisp and vigorous. Its air is more agreeable than its sky, its sky more pleasing than its description in Arabic rhymes, and its cold blasts, being



ZIOUD WOMEN.



A GREAT ARAB EMIR.

To face page 78.



7,544 feet above the sea, are lined with a golden warmth, being within the equatorial region.

Lying in the plain of Sanhan, San'a is surrounded with mountains, which do not, however, crowd upon it. At the end of the plain, about ten miles north, are the famous gardens and vineyards of Ar-Rowdhah, while about the same distance south-west are the rushing waters and mills of Al-Houtah. The nearest mountain to it is 'Usor, which casts its shadow upon the meadows in the afternoon ; and Luqom in the east, which supplies it with water. Beyond is 'Ishar with its quarries of marble and alabaster ; on the horizon south and west are Aanes and Shi'wan, where mica abounds ; and there is Ridhradh still waiting for science and finance to operate its silver mines ; while north-west of it is Shibam the native place of the Yaman gems of chalcedony and jasper.

San'a, the city of legend and poesy and treasure trove, the capital of the Happy Yaman, where now sits the Incarnation of all the Ancient Virtues the Imam Yahya ibn Hamid'ud-Din, is, indeed, a revelation to the traveller, who had gone through the mud villages and slept in the squalid dens of the country beyond it south and west all the way down to the sea.

There again, a mile outside the city, were the indigo soldiers of the Imam with bugle and drum, accompanying the officials and the citizens who came out to meet and welcome us in his name. The procession had become familiar and, in all but the national anthem, tiresome. I liked especially the refrain of the *zamel*, as it is called, which must have a terrorizing effect upon the enemy, and I understood a few of the lines they were singing on our way to the city.

' We marched out when the dawn itself was yet asleep—

No light of moon or star was on our steel ;

But when we reached the top of the *naghil*,

The dawn was there the ambush to reveal,

And there the foe we slaughtered as we slaughter sheep.'



Repeating the last line, they marched past the citadel, which was built by the Turks outside the city, and coming to the Aden gate, a fine piece of architecture, they swung around the city wall down the road that led to the gate of Bir'ul-'Azab. There we entered, and while crossing the broad square, called Maidan'ush-Shararah, which is west of San'a, the reception acquired a new feature ; something distinct and original was reserved for the Capital. Indeed, we were introduced for the first time to the *dowshan* (troubadour) of Al-Yaman.

Two men without any musical instruments, however, stood before the mules of Yanni and myself—the procession had to stop—and began to vociferate in strains that were neither lyrical nor martial nor even oratorical, but seemed to partake boldly of the three. The two troubadours did not mind how they fell on our ears ; and the meaning of their rhymes, which were innocent of love or war, was only apposite—troubadoric—in what I thought was the satire in their praise ; for they pulled down the sun to put me in his place, and lowered the moon to set up Yanni's throne upon it. After which, the valedictory, and then—two Marie Theresas for their trouble.

Bir'ul-'Azab at the end of the Maidan, outside the city wall, but contiguous to it, is a separate quarter, the fashionable quarter of San'a, where are also the palaces of the Imam and the seat of Government. There we were conducted into a little house whose excellences are not in keeping with the size or number of its rooms. But our greatest joy was in a table, which was set in the court, under a spreading apricot tree, near a purling fountain. The pomegranate and the fig peeped upon us from above the garden wall. I doubted at first my eyes. But we did sit upon chairs ; we did eat with knife and fork ; and the dinner, although overspiced, was cooked by a *cook*.

From my seat at the table I beheld an alcove in the centre of which is a quadruple door opening on a diwan

furnished with carpets and with cushions and *masnads* encased in a barred cloth of red and yellow and green. That was our reception room.

The large roman arch of the alcove, in black and white stone, is set off on each side by a smaller arch of the same design, and is reflected in the sunken fountain together with the flower pots at its edge. Roses and carnations and the sweet basil plant perfumed the place; birds twittered in the trees; and the sun, filtering through the branches, added drops of gold to the silvery jet of the fountain. The scene transported me to Damascus.

Here was, indeed, an abode of bliss, our home for more than a month—also our jail. But I must not so soon spoil the picture. The reader will know everything at the proper time. After resting that afternoon we asked the man who remained with us if we may be directed to a Turkish bath. 'There are no baths Turkish in San'a,' he said, 'much better are our own. But it is not good to go to the bath on the day of arrival from a journey. To-morrow you will go.'

On the morning of the following day one of the soldiers stationed outside came in to say that the *hammam* was open for us. 'But you need towels and soap and *kohl* and frankincense,' said Sheikh Saleh. 'There is nothing at the *hammam* but the vapour and the water.' 'Where is the *hammam*?' I asked of the soldier, 'I will go and see what they have.' 'Near,' he replied, 'very near.' But we must have walked a full mile through the sanded streets, between high mud walls, behind which are concealed the gardens and homes of the élite of San'a, and more than once, losing patience, I asked: 'Where is the *hammam*?' It is safe to figure that 'very near' in Al-Yaman is always a walk of at least an hour.

At last we reached the domed building, at the door of which stood the *qaiyim* (steward) waiting for us. He

bowed and salaamed and repeated, 'Enter, ya Bey, enter.' He was not the only one that took me for a Turk. 'Have you towels?' I asked. 'How is it possible, ya Bey, not to have towels, and soap, and *kohl*, and aromatic wood, and coffee, and a *mada'ah*, when the son of his Excellency the Secretary of the Imam, Sidi Ali himself, came last night in person and ordered the *hammam* closed to the public that my lord the Bey and his companion might enjoy to the full its delights.'

I sent back the soldier to tell Yanni to come, and I entered *bismillah*. The composition and design are like those of a *hammam* of Damascus or Stamboul, but not as elaborate or attractive. At either side of the fountain in the first room are stage-like recesses, furnished with mats and rugs, which are used both for dressing and reposing after the bath. Beyond that is a series of low, stone-paved chambers of different degrees of heat, the walls of which ooze with the whitewash and vapour. There are chimney-like channels through which the vapour travels from the earthen boiler in the cellar. And cockroaches a-plenty.

But the rubber knew his business, although he tried to shine as well in the function of the barber. He talked and talked, telling me of all the excellencies and exalted highnesses, the beys and pashas of the Dowlah he had the honour of rubbing. And clubbing, I added, for his hand at times came down upon my back like a club. His tongue, moreover, never ceased. I tried to break the great flow by asking him a few questions, one of which led to an awful discovery.

Knowing that they had but little charcoal or wood in San'a, I asked him if he used dry dung to heat his *hammam*. 'No,' he replied, and then smiled. 'Not that of the cow,' after a little pause, 'but that of man.' 'And who gathers and prepares it for fuel?' 'The Yahuda (Jew), that is the business of the Yahuda only.' He sells it for about 20 cents a donkey load.



SAN'A, THE COURT AND FOUNTAIN OF THE HOUSE WE  
OCCUPIED.

To face page 82.



The Jew of Al-Yaman, who still pays a tribute as in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, is held in deep contempt by the Muslem, especially the Zaidi, but he is an industrious and ingenious member of the community. I have seen objects of art in filigreed silver and gold, which only he can make, and which are beautiful. But more about him later.

The rubber was delighted in telling how his bath is heated by the Yahuda, and I was disgusted. I could not even get him to change the subject, or to use only his hand upon me. At last he held both his tongue and hand in peace, and I went back to the reclining room, eager for a nap. But as soon as I lay down—O Muhammad ! O Yahuda ! I had seen in the vapour room cockroaches as big as a mouse, but they could run ; and anything, of the things that creep, that can run or even perform visibly the act of locomotion, I dread not so much as that which quietly, slowly, stealthily attaches itself to you, and makes you feel, when you see it upon your sleeve, worse than a leper. And there it was on the cushion—a big fat white louse ! I left the coffee, the *mada'ah*, the incense on the tray, and, dressing quickly, I walked out of the place feeling like Diogenes when he came out of a public bath in Athens.

But that was not the fault of Sidi Ali Zabarah, who had ordered the *hammam* prepared in our honour and for our exclusive use. That was what I first thought ; that was what the *qaiyim* himself said. But on the following day I discovered the reason for the extraordinary courtesy. He did not want us to see, or talk with, any people in the absence of the Imam. It was thus ordered.

His Eminence had been away from San'a ten days. Two of his tribes in the north, the Hawashid and 'Iyal Sarih, said his friends, were practising *bunduq* and *jambiyah* (gun and dagger) upon each other, and he had to go himself, for their own sake, to the seat of trouble. But others said—those who whisper anathema against the

Saiyeds and the Imamdom—that the Hawashid and Sarih were threatening to join the Idrisi and use their *bunduqa* against the Imam himself, if their grievances were not forthwith redressed.

By the help of a man of real worth, who came to see us on the second day of our arrival, we were able to sift these contrary rumours. Saiyed Abdullah'ul-'Amry son of the Chief Justice of San'a and First Secretary to the Imam, has nothing in him of the fanatical military passion of the junkers we met in Mawia and Zamar. His is a soft voice, and an absorbing manner. 'There is imperfection and in some instances mistaken zeal,' he said, replying to a question about the Imam's officials. 'Undesirabilities cannot be altogether avoided or overcome.' The Imam himself is upright and just, upholds the law, and directs the affairs of the country with a strong and unwavering hand. There is order and security and prosperity in the main, also equality between Zaidi and Shaf'i, but on the borders, here and there, there is still unrest, even agitation.

Saiyed Abdullah'ul-'Amri renewed my hope in the Yaman. He is of those Arabs who are capable of appreciating the modern point of view, as well as upholding the traditional views with wisdom and moderation.

But Saiyed Ali, who was in charge at the *madhif*, did not seem to approve of the visit of Saiyed Abdullah, and when we asked him to send someone with us to the house of a man in the city, to whom we had a letter of introduction, he said briefly: 'When the Imam returns.'

'While waiting for the return of the Imam,' I said, 'could we not see the city?' Our servant Madani, who was permitted to go to the Souq to buy a few things for us, had just returned carrying a basket of apricots and sweet limes. Also a sheaf of tales from wonder's field. The Souq of Jeddah is nothing—the Souq of San'a is a

marvel—a multitude of people, buying and selling—delicious things to eat—fruits and cakes and nuts and sweetmeats—and the fine daggers !—and the high buildings—and carriages in the street. ‘And children to pester you,’ added Saiyed Ali. He then discarded his circumlocution. ‘You have come to visit the Imam. Is it seemly, therefore, to go elsewhere before he comes?’

We were permitted, however, to walk around the city wall, accompanied by an official and six soldiers—‘to drive away the children,’ said the Saiyed. ‘And it is more seemly.’ It was, I thought, more for the seemliness, which in Arabia is often a euphemism for precaution.

The wall of San'a is about four miles around, of rubble and mud, 15 feet high, from 3 to 5 feet deep, with turrets mostly in ruin, and four gates. We started on the west side, walking north and then east. The fields along the road are partly cultivated, but there are stretches of barrenness between the green zone and the gardens of Ar-Rowdhah. Beyond Ar-Rowdhah is the Arhab country, which is the vestibule to the home of the Hawashid in the mountain north-west.

There was nothing attractive or interesting on the way, and no trees to afford a shelter from the broiling sun. After an hour's walk, therefore, having arrived at the gate of Ash-Sham (north), we stopped to reconsider the question I had proposed. The official was like myself, tired of walking in the sun and disgusted as well, I think, with the monotony and unprofitableness of our enterprise. So he took the sergeant aside and consulted with him ; the sergeant took one of the soldiers aside and they exchanged whispers, after which they granted my wish. But I was asked to swear by Allah and the Prophet that I would not let Saiyed Ali know of the matter. The which I did. Whereupon, we entered the city through the gate of Ash-Sham.

San'a is purely Arabic in architecture as well as in spirit. Its streets, like those of Jeddah, are unpaved,



but they are wider and cleaner. Its houses are from four to six stories high, built mostly of granite and basalt, some of brick, some of plastered rubble, but they are firmly constructed, and doubtless by line and plummet. There are no leaning-towers-of-Piza here as in Jeddah. Nor are there any ramshackle wooden balconies. The design is pure, the architecture is consistent, and the material is mostly from Al-Yaman. Very little is imported from India or from Europe ; nothing in the design, at least, and the plan. Between the floors on the outside are zones of geometrical figures cut in the plaster, and above every window is a loophole, round or diagonal, fitted with a plate of alabaster almost as thin and transparent as glass. Most of the houses have belvederes, which are furnished with rugs and low diwans and used as reception rooms ; those whose houses have no belvedere generally use the top floor for this purpose. The belvedere, which is called *manzarah* (lookout), is open on the four sides and is fitted both with shutters and alabaster windows. In some houses glass is used instead, and it is coloured—mosaically designed—in the four primaries that are produced and mostly used in Al-Yaman, *i.e.*, red, yellow, blue and green. The effect in the evening, especially in the candle light, is ecclesiastical.

As we were going through the residential quarter (we had agreed not to go to the Souq), the official, my guide, pointing to certain blocks, spoke of them as first and second class. There is also a third class—for the masses—in San'a, and were there any Bedu, there would be a fourth class living in *baitis* (booths) of hair outside the city wall.

The houses are high in San'a, but not the rent. It never was, not even during the war or after. Nor did the people of Al-Yaman know, during the war or after, the A or the Z of the high cost of living. The product of the soil was sufficient to feed them ; the product of the loom was sufficient to clothe them ; and they needed

nothing but cotton and some dyes, which they imported from India. The prices, moreover, seldom vary in a manner to be felt.<sup>1</sup>

As for rent, some of my friends in Cairo and New York, were they not sceptical, would pack up and go to San'a, when they read the schedule. There are houses from four to six stories high in the best residential section, with belvederes and alabaster windows and decorative zones, for four Marie Theresas a month ; the rent of a house in the second-class section is three M.T.'s (6s.) a month, while one in the third class, three stories of basalt or granite with decorative zones and alabaster windows, can be rented for 4s. !

The people of Al-Yaman, nevertheless, complain. They complain of business depression, of financial depression, of general depression. Some blame the Imam for it ; some blame Allah ; while others, a very small minority, exonerate Allah and the Imam of the evils of the times, which have invaded even Al-Yaman through a political situation created by the Turks in the past and by the English after the war. But the Imam Yahya, who succeeded in combating the first and is now struggling against the second, has to have money for the purpose. Hence the heavy taxations, which are draining the country of *zalat*—silver and gold—and producing a general depression.

Moreover, the Yaman is always exposed to agitation and strife, resulting from a tendency—an inherent national weakness—to rush to arms to uphold a private cause or right a personal or a tribal wrong. No, patriotism in its purest strain—a true national feeling—

<sup>1</sup> Here are a few prices : Mutton, 1½d. a lb. Beef, 2½d. lb. Eggs, 2½d. a dozen. Butter, 3d. lb. Wheat, 60 piasters a qadah. Potatoes, 20 piasters a qadah.

The Marie Theresa dollar is 20 piasters, or about 2s. 1d. The qadah is 40 okes, and the oke in Al-Yaman is 1 lb. more than it is in Turkey, i.e., 3.85. A qadah of wheat, therefore, is 155 lbs., and is sold for 60 piasters, or 6s. And for ½d. one gets 3 lbs. of potatoes !

does not exist, neither among the tribes nor among the farming population. Ignorance may be the cause of what may be called a state of anarchy with intervals of order and peace, but the direct cause, the immediate and principal cause is *ignorance in arms*.

The official my guide was telling me about the defeat of the Turks, when the Imam besieged them in San'a. 'After the siege,'<sup>1</sup> he said, 'we won so many *bunduqs* that a Mauser was sold for one *real*. And after the battle of Shaharah he who could carry a cannon away was welcome to it.' No wonder that the people are always ready to fight; the regular army of the Imam is not more indomitable than the regular army of the Turks.

'Here,' said he, as we passed by a building near the double gate of Bir'ul-'Azab, 'is the school for girls, which the Turks had opened and which is now closed.' There was a deprecating gesture in his words; and when we were nearing our quarters, he begged me again not to tell 'Sidi Ali' that we had entered the city. But alas! 'Sidi Ali' was already informed of the matter, and when I asked on the following day if I may continue the tour of the city wall, he smiled and moved his turban up and down his forehead—the Yamani's equivalent of scratching the head—and started to repeat his favourite speech of 'Is-it-seemly-in-the-absence-of-the-Imam.' I made no reply.

But I did ask for a *mada'ah*, which the servant hastened to prepare, and I sat down to contemplate the waste of the fountain and flowers upon us. Our little garden was transformed into a prison—the peace and beauty of the arcadian scene were fled. Captives! Until the Image

<sup>1</sup> This was in 1904, and the siege lasted six months. There were 70,000 Turks in San'a including the civilian population. 'We made them eat even rats,' says the Yamani. But two years after, the Turks came back, and the Imam fled to Shaharah, where they pursued him. In those northern hills the battle of Shaharah took place. It was Faidhy Pasha's Waterloo. Three thousand of the Imam's men held the town against 30,000 Turks, and then, in the attack, they wiped out the whole army. They had the advantage, however, of position.

of Perfection returns to San'a. But a captive will try to bore with all his senses, at least, into the walls of his freedom. I had already heard what sounded like the click of a typewriter or a telegraph transmitter, but my curiosity was aroused only when I realized that I could not even go outside to inquire about it. The door to the little yard between our court and the Maidan (Shararah Square) was closed, but there was a wall from which, by the help of the dining table, I could see four wires extending into one of the windows of the floor above us. It is, to be sure, the office of the *silk*, as the telegraph is called in Al-Yaman.

The next discovery I made was through a chink in the courtyard door, and here again the ear was scout to the eye. I first heard a noise outside and then an exchange of angry words. The soldiers were quarrelling, and one of them, a hunchback, said : ' They are Arabs like ourselves.' I then saw him coming towards the door, which was locked from the outside. He opened it and entered. Did we desire anything ? He was at our disposal. I have luck, it seems, with hunchbacks ; and the kind Zaidi, who reminded me of the hunchback Turk in Mawia, was eager to be of service. He answered questions most gladly and volubly.

We were living in one of the many houses of the Imam, who is very very rich, and very very pious, and very very just, and very, very learned. On the floor above was not only the office of the *silk*, but the very Noble Seat of the Imamdom. And under the tree in the yard outside sits His Eminence an hour a day to dispense justice to the people. Would I like to sit under the tree ?

I walked out with Ahmad, still thinking of the great and good Imam who chose to keep us, in the wide realm of his guidance and protection, so close to himself. But I did not sit under the Tree of Justice, for in the hall, which led to the floor above, was a knot of soldiers, squatting in a circle and quarrelling, while something

clicked between them, as if they were shooting craps. Curious, I stood near the door. One of the soldiers, with a bag in his hand, was doling out what I first thought were Marie Theresa dollars. But the distribution was not satisfactory, for they clamoured about it. The little fellow with his back to me—I learned afterwards that he was but fourteen years of age—held out a threatening hand, and swore by Allah that he did not get his share in full. Not of Marie Theresas, no—it was not pay day—the soldier in charge of the bag was counting out bullets ! These are the dollars, which seem more precious, of the soldiers of the Imam ; and the little one did not put down his hand or stop swearing till he had his cartridge belt filled. He then got up and walked out of the hall as proud as a Saiyed.

In a corner of this hall I made a discovery—two—three discoveries. Here were the drums of the Imam, several of them of different sizes and forms with cylinders of earthenware and brass. Here, too, were the flags and standards, and Ahmad my good guardian and guide hastened to satisfy my curiosity. One of those he opened is of green silk on which is embroidered in yellow thread the words : *And We Have Given You a Great Victory*. Another is of yellow silk on which is written in green : *Paradise is in the Shadow of Spears*. The third, a larger flag, with the two Testimonies upon it—I testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah—in letters of gold.

But more important than flag and drum is the famous umbrella, the Sacred Umbrella (*mazallah*), about which we had heard in Lahaj, in Aden, even in Jeddah. There was, in fact, more than one, and Ahmad was quick to exhibit and explain. The smallest, about 4 feet in diameter, is used when the Imam sits in the open to dispense justice ; the second, a little larger, when he goes out for an ordinary walk ; and the third, the *mazallah*, is only used on Friday, when His Eminence goes to pray



A FAMILY AT SAN'A.

To face page 90.



at the Grand Mosque. Ahmad opened it with the help of another soldier. An umbrella? A tent rather, about 10 feet in diameter, made of embroidered white and pale blue silk, with a broad fringe of point-lace, rare outside a lady's wardrobe. This is the *mazallah*, the Canopy of State, under which the Imam moves on Friday, surrounded by his secretaries, his high officials, his Saiyeds, his beloved subjects, and preceded by his indigo soldiers singing the *zamel*.

I was happier in this little tour of the courtyard with Ahmad than in my adventure through the city—happier for having seen, and touched with my own hand, the Sacred Umbrella of the Image of Perfection ; and when I returned to my quarters the good hunchback Ahmad followed me, squatted on the carpet before me, and volunteered a bit of information, which shed some light on the said I.P.'s method of business.

'Before you, lived in this house Fat'hi Bey, and the Imam came alone to see him at night. Fat'hi Bey left San'a last week. He is a very good man ; he gave me this sack coat. And one day he borrowed ten reals from me, but the day he left, he gave me twenty. . . . I do not know, *wallah*. But I have heard them say that he came from Egypt to repair the *silk* (telegraph) instruments.'

Ahmad will, no doubt, tell about us to-morrow, and perhaps say that we came from the American University to buy ancient manuscripts !



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE IMAM YAHYA

OUR incarceration, in spite of the charm of our prison, was getting irksome, and one day, when Sheikh Saleh had been to the Souq, I expressed my envy. 'There is nothing in the city,' he said with a woeful expression. 'The dust is blinding, the wind is withering, and the Imam is away.' He emphasised the last calamity. The all-giver and all-protector, the light and breath of Al-Yaman was away ! And San'a especially was down in the dust, was widowed, as the poet said, and bereaved. We, too, while waiting, although escaping the wind and dust, shared in the bereavement.

Four long weary days, and then—San'a will again be a bride to-night ! The Saiyeds and high officials rode out to meet the Groom who was not very far from the city. But we were all disappointed, for passing by a certain town the Imam saw blood flowing before him and he had to stop. The townsmen had slain a bullock in his name, and it were unseemly not to accept their hospitality. This is the custom. When His Eminence is travelling, the town that would entertain him sends a delegation with a bullock to meet him on the road, and the bullock is slain before him that there be no refusal nor excuse.

On the following day I was awakened from my siesta by the Wo-ho-haw of the *zamel* and the sound of bugle and drum. The Imam had arrived and was riding through the Maidan to the Palace to meet first his wives and children. An hour after that he came to his *majlis* on the floor above our quarters and directly sent for us. I was ready in my best *aba* and head-dress, and Captain Yanni

in his Hijaz uniform. On our way upstairs, in the courtyard or in the hall, there was nothing of the military pomp that greeted us at Mawia and Zamar. One of the officials had, in fact, told us that some of the *'ummāl* of the Imam, unlike himself, are very pompous. No soldiers were stationed at the entrance or on the landing; but only two guards outside the *majlis*, with sprigs of sweet basil in their turbans, one to open the door, the other to announce the visitors.

Nevertheless, I wonder whether the Imam was like the Ameers of his army or a genial and gracious Arab like King Husein; and my wonderment, as I stood before the door of the *majlis*, was not, I must admit, wholly free from trepidation.

Just as we entered we found ourselves before a man of middle height, small of foot and hand, swarthy and rugged of features, among which were distinguishable, at first sight, a broad forehead, a pouting mouth, and a closely cropped, slightly salted round beard. His mouth is particularly mobile, hard and somewhat sad in repose, soft and cunning in action. His dark eyes, which seem to pinch a rather stocky nose, beam often with candour and scintillate at times to terrorise—are like two live sparks in a glower.

He wore a caftan of barred cotton cloth of Yaman weave and an ample white turban, the ends of which fell at the back of his head and over his right ear. This tassel effect, called *zuabah*, is the only distinguishing mark between him and the Saiyeds his cousins, whose turbans are also white and as large as one's caprice may dictate. The Imam of Al-Yaman is in this like the King of Al-Hijaz, whose *zuabah* distinguishes him from the other Sherifs. But the Imam Yahya's is longer than that of King Husein, and he, moreover, sports two instead of one.

His Eminence, when we entered, was recumbent on a black covered mattress—the royal mattress—set over a

low couch and furnished with round red cushions on which he leaned. At the foot of the couch was a gentleman in a kneeling posture picking at a bunch of *ghat*—the very gentleman whose business for the past week was to gently keep us behind closed doors—and presenting the tenderest leaves to his lord and master the King of Al-Yaman and Imam of the Zioud, Yahya ibn Hamid'ud-Din the Dependent on Allah.

When we approached the royal couch he offered his hand, saying : '*Marhaba* (welcome).' But, like his Ameers at Mawia and Zamar, he did not rise or make the slightest attempt to do so. He then motioned us to a carpet spread over a mattress opposite to his own. The room is small and similarly furnished on two sides, but near the door is a high diwan for the Turkish officers who come in their uniforms and boots, and cannot, therefore, sit cross-legged. There are Turkish maps of Arabia on the walls, and over the royal couch were hung on a peg a sword and a *jambiyah*, those of the Imam, which he discards when he is at the *majlis*.

It was *ghat*-time in San'a, what answers to our five o'clock tea. The Imam had a wad, not very noticeable, in his mouth, while before him stood a cuspidor and a thermos bottle, which a servant every now and then refilled with water. Indeed, like everyone in his realm, His Eminence is a *ghat*-eater, but he is dainty about the 'deposit,' which bulges out grossly with some of the most illustrious of his subjects. In drinking water, however, he is not unlike the rest, for he did so frequently out of the thermos direct, sipping, not gulping, as if he were taking coffee—sipping with the noise that indicates delight, and exclaiming every time, *Walhamdulillah* !

I had intended to make a little speech, but I remained seated, following the royal example, and after thanking His Eminence for the many kind receptions we met with on our way to San'a, I stated briefly the threefold purpose of my travels in Arabia. To see the country, to write



OUR ESCORT FROM IBB TO DHAMAR



ZIOUD SOLDIERS RESTING.



about it and to be of some service to its people and their cause—that is what brought me from beyond the seas, from America. ‘Although a Syrian by birth, an American by naturalisation, I am in my blood an Arab; and although Christianity is the religion of my inheritance, I am also of the faith of the great poets and philosophers of Arabia—Al-Ghazzaly, Al-Farid and Abu’l-Ala—as well as of the young Arabs of today who are working for union and independence, and seeking to reinvest their country with its former prestige and power. . . . “Who upholds Arabia, upholds Al-Islam” . . .’ I then said something about my visit to Al-Hijaz and the gracious reception accorded me by King Husein, who was happy to know that I was also coming to San‘a and, therefore, sent with me one of his officials, Captain Yanni, an honest worker for the cause of Arabia and the Arabs.

The Imam pronounced a few brief words of appreciation and thanks. Captain Yanni then got up and read a poem which he had written on the way for the occasion, and of which His Eminence, himself a poet, approved, signalling a few lines for especial praise. After which I presented to him the letter of King Husein, which he read, and then remarked that no name was mentioned in it. ‘It is, perhaps, the neglect of the Secretary,’ I said. But I knew it was not. For when I was about to leave Jeddah, the Foreign Minister, Sheikh Fouad, wrote a letter of introduction which was not approved by the King. Another letter was afterwards written by the First Secretary, dictated by His Majesty himself, introducing to the Noble Imamic Seat the Arab patriot and poet, the . . . reformer, the . . . philosopher, etc., and for reasons which remain hidden in the mystifying dust of the Hashemite Diwan, my name was not mentioned. Which aroused a doubt in the breast of the Imam, and added to our difficulty. But of this later.

In beginning the discussion I mentioned Pan-Arabism, and His Eminence said : ‘You have reached its ultimate

destination.’<sup>1</sup> But he is a champion of Pan-Islam, and he had written a poem recently which was widely circulated, calling upon the Muslims of the world to unify their aims in word and deed, and to ‘tuck the sleeve and join in the defense of Al-Islam.’ He reverted, therefore, to the subject.

‘But race unites,’ I said, ‘and religion separates. The Christian of Syria is an Arab like the Muslim, and this nationality is destined to unite firmly the two and keep them united. . . . Religion separates the Syrian Christians from you, but the feeling of race will bring them back, is bringing them back, to you.’ His Eminence nodded approval, and asked me to specify. He was more interested when I went into the details of the matter, thus coming to the core of our mission. But just then the door opened and the guard announced Mahmoud Nadim Bey. The Imam raised a finger to his mouth, and nothing more was said on the subject that afternoon.

The ex-Vali of the Dowlah in Al-Yaman kissed the hand of the Imam, who partly requited the honour by rising to his knee only and kissing him on the cheek. But the other Turks who came in later reminded me of the citizens of Jeddah when they came to salaam His Majesty the King. Some of these officers kissed the hand of the Imam twice, some three times, back and palm, while one of them knelt before His Eminence and kissed also his knee. It was not a little of their own medicine they were getting, but a very heavy dose of it. Indeed, it was pathetic. The Turks who fought forty years for the Yaman, and lost thousands of their men, and eventually lost everything, it was poignantly sad to see this poor remnant of them thus humbled in the dust.

Other people came to salaam His Eminence and congratulate him on his return, the Arabs kowtowing before him like the Turks. Only one man did he welcome standing upright, a venerable old man who had shaved

<sup>1</sup> Literally : ‘You have arrived at the stopping place of its caravan.’

his mustaches and cultivated his beard like a Yankee. He was Sheikh'ul-Islam, the only one among all the high officials of the Imamdom who is privileged to exchange with the Imam a kiss on the cheek. He condescended to nod, after taking his seat in the corner, when we were introduced to him by His Eminence, who said for the tenth time, as he pointed to me and then to my companion: 'This is Ameen and this is Constantine, two Christians from Lebanon.' It was always accompanied, however, with a smile—a smile that lights up his rugged features and renders his presence assuring, even agreeable. But when the superintendent of his cartridge factory, an Austrian who had gone very far to go wrong, came in to kiss the Imamic hand and kowtow like a Yamani or a Turk, he was introduced to us by His Eminence as 'Gurjy (Georgy), one of you.' He smiled, while chewing at the *ghat*, to temper his contempt. It was gracious of him, nevertheless; for the Zaidi, the reader will bear in mind, is the most exclusive, not to say fanatical, of all Muslims. Even a Muslim writer of the thirteenth century, the Andalusian Ibn Jubair, speaks of the Zioud as 'fanatics and snobs, who denounce everybody outside of their sect.' They have not changed in 600 years.

The Imam, after our fellow Christian the Austrian 'Georgy' came in, asked me a curious question, and I do not know whether it was actuated by a desire for knowledge, or by some lurking contempt, or just by a fancy, being a poet, for alliteration. 'Why,' he asked, 'was Jesus called Messiah?' I answered the best I could, giving also 'to anoint' as one of the many definitions of *masaha* in Arabic. But His Eminence did not seem convinced. 'He was called Messiah,' he said, 'because His foot was flat. It did not have this arch.' He turned his little stockinged foot—a beautifully shaped foot, indeed, much like a woman's—to show the arch, which was quite pronounced. To understand the allusion, it should be noted that *masah* (flat) in Arabic is derived from *masaha* (to



anoint). Aside from being superficial, it was, I thought, very crude. How different the *majlis* of King Husein, where a traveller seldom heard a word that displeases or offends. But 'the flat-footed Christ' would offend even an agnostic.

I think I reacted on the spot, for I asked His Eminence a question, which 'Sidi Ali,' who was still kneeling at the foot of the royal couch and picking at the *ghat*, would characterise as unseemly. It may have been unseemly at that time, but my excuse was that of a traveller seeking knowledge.

'What is the population, ya Mowlana, of Al-Yaman?'

'Approximately,' he replied, 'five million.'

'And how many of the five million do you govern?'

(Smiling and holding out his hand with the fingers close to the palm.) 'A small number, very small.'

Whereupon, one of the Turkish officers, availing himself of the opportunity for a little adulation, said in Arabic: 'Every one of the five millions obeys the Imam.'

'No, no,' His Eminence objected, and then he turned to me, repeating his graceful gesture—just a handful.

But when it comes to the boundary of Al-Yaman, the Imam recognizes only the ancient line which includes within it Oman, Hadhramout, and Aden. Coupling this with the gesture of just-a-handful, we get a clear idea of the extent of his political ambition.

Two youngsters, about ten and twelve years of age, sporting the Yaman mantle across the shoulder and wearing caftans with voluminous sleeves and turbans of cloth of gold embroidered with sayings from the Koran, came in unannounced, tripped across the room unnoticed by the Imam or anyone else, and sat down with a thump in the corner near Sheikh'ul-Islam. They looked like dolls which were set in motion at the door of the *majlis*—dolls with pale faces, down-in-the-mouth expressions, and large *kohled* black eyes. They were two of the children of the Imam. Not far from them was another doll, who looked

as if a Chinese artist had made him and wound him up. He was so slight and young for his long beard and immutable expression ; and he sat there cross-legged moving his head up and down and chewing *ghat*. But next to him sat a Sheikh that reminded me of those I first met at Mawia. When I was asking the Imam questions, he turned towards me with a look that spoke of poisoned arrows—a more suave and more deadly is rarely conceivable.

But the Imam's eyes have no subtle weapons ; either a light which shines in a straight line upon you or a blazing brand which hits you between the eyes. There are no adumbrations, and the undercurrents are too often betrayed by a tempestuousness which he does not always try to control. Seldom indeed do his features, even in repose, reflect any of the spirituality which is in him, for he is capable of seeing and appreciating the silent virtues of the spirit.

His intellect is more in evidence and more resilient. He exercises it in spare moments even in composing stately and frigid rhymes. Besides, he keeps himself informed of the principal events of the world, without having to read all the newspapers of Cairo and Damascus and Baghdad, even of New York and Rio Janeiro (Arabic, ofcourse), which are sent to him. His secretaries read them and give him a summary of the news. Nor is he in this alone, as will be seen later, like the prime minister of an Empire or the president of an American Corporation.

His questions considering the distance of San'a from the world were surprising. Has Ireland achieved her independence? Will Curzon succeed Lloyd George? Where is Zaghlul Pasha now? Has Mustapha Kemal made a separate treaty with the French? And is he receiving much assistance from America? He was particularly interested in Ireland and America. How many years does the President of America rule? And is he re-elected? How many times is he entitled to re-

election? I told him the story of George Washington, who refused the Presidency the third time, saying: 'We did not free ourselves from the rule of kings to set up a monarchy in America.' Which the Imam admired. But his other famous word, 'In times of peace prepare for war,' brought the light of ecstasy to his brow, as if it were a saying of the Prophet. He repeated it, and paused, and then nodded: '*Nahi, kalam nahi* (fine words).'

Meanwhile he continued to chew the *ghat*, and every now and then the soldier would come in with a letter or a petition, which he would read and dispose of. One of these, a very long document, wrought a remarkable change in his expression. I watched his eyes while he read. In them the eruption or the indication of it first takes place. While they are declaring war against you, however, his mouth, like a messenger of peace, smiles assurance. I have often noticed this conflicting expression. But when he was reading that long document, the change before he came to the end was complete and consistent. Slaughter was both in his eyes and on his lips. I asked, when he set the document down, for permission to leave, and he dismissed us with a wave of the hand—a quick, brusque, offensive gesture, as if he would say, Go, get out!

I felt as if I had been kicked out, and I wondered if that long document was a secret report, sent by some one in Aden, who would ingratiate himself with the British Residency, to discredit us in the eye of the Imam. I wondered, and I later inquired, and I have no reason to believe the contrary.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CAPTIVE GUEST

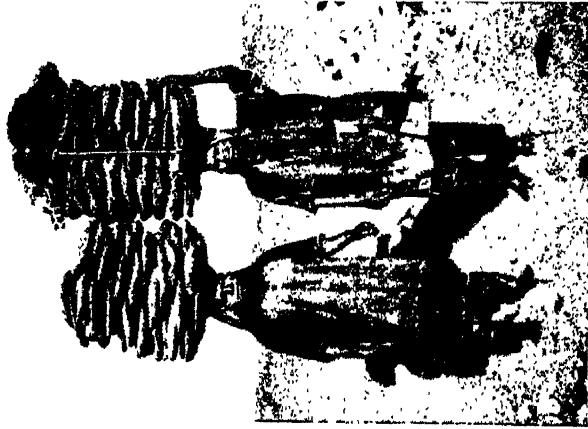
THERE is but one supreme will in Al-Yaman, and that is the Imam's—a will which is law, a law which is irrevokable—and freedom, when there is law and order, only exists within the Imamic limitations. In Jeddah, in Lahaj, in Aden, people came to see us, took an interest in us, invited us to their homes, expressed their opinions, although cautiously, and always with a certain freedom. But in San'a we were in the house of the Imam and no one dared to come to see us without his permission, which was withheld for several days after the first interview.

Why and wherefore? I had nothing to do but analyse my Zaidi Imam. He was all the time on my mind—he was even in my heart. Aye, he is a poet, and poets are incapable of suspicion. He is a religious teacher, and all religions teach love and trust and goodwill. He is an Arab chief, and all Arab chiefs are kind and generous and gracious hosts. He is a diplomat, and diplomats are very seldom brusque. Moreover, he is an autocratic ruler with a passion for justice—one who swerves not in the course of justice. He is also capable of clemency and deals kindly, paternally, with his beloved subjects. Let me not forget to add that he is ever alert and watchful, and he has a power besides, to put into execution his slightest and his greatest wish. Had we come to him, therefore, with the most nefarious design, we should find ourselves palsied on his threshold. Aye, I have almost forgotten to tell you that His Eminence is also a clairvoyant and miracle-worker. But everything will come in its time and place.

Meanwhile, our relations, in the language of diplomacy, are strained ; and we have not, to the best of our knowledge and belief, contributed aught to the threatened rupture. We have even found an excuse for ' the flat-footed Christ.' The Imam is learned in the theologies, and we are not. But what excuse is there for the bad taste of a descendant of ten generations of Imams and poets—a taste which does not harmonize at least with his beautiful foot ?

The first day passed after that first interview without a word from the Noble Seat to bolster up our courage, without even an assuring gesture. The second day passed, and even ' Sidi Ali ' did not come. The third day—every hour of it seemed a month. But in the evening he came, Sidi Ali. Of course, King Husein is to blame for failing to mention my name in the letter. Of course, people suspect us. . . . Even those who have honoured us have sent to the Imam the story of our lives. But what about the letter of the Imam's Representative in Aden—'Arashy's glowing recommendation ? Ah, 'Arashy, too, is discredited at the Noble Seat. He has been a whole year in Aden, and he has not done anything to enforce upon the Ingliz the will of the Imam. But, hearken, O Sidi Ali. If His Eminence cannot accord me a private interview soon—he certainly must be very busy after an absence of ten days from the capital—might I not be allowed to continue the tour of the city wall, at least ? It is not good for you to walk in the hot sun, replied Sidi Ali. About sunset to-morrow you will go out, *inshallah*. But about sunset on the following day, he came, Sidi Ali, bringing with him another Saiyed who wished to pay me a visit. I could not, therefore, go out for a walk. I knew, however, it was a ruse to keep me in, and I was powerless against it.

It was most exasperating. I was losing my sleep, my patience, even my temper. All of which are needed for a higher purpose than mere pleasure in the business of



PORTERS WITH THEIR BURDENS.



THE HOME IN THE BOULDER NEAR  
METNE.

To face page 102.



travel. But what pleasure is there travelling in the land of the Zioud—and what pleasure, prithee, in walking around the city wall?

Indeed, Constantine was wiser, for dawdling in the City of Fancy instead. He espoused the Muse; and when I took down from a niche in the wall my notebook that evening, I found written in it what I might have attributed, under different circumstances, to the Jinn. But the rhymes did echo a plaint very similar to my own. Said my fellow prisoner:

‘Thou wouldst behold the City’s face,  
When at thy door the sentry stands!  
Beware, there is, a worse place—  
Enough for him who understands.’

I followed the example of Constantine, but I failed, I think, in trying to improve on his rhyme and his meaning.

‘If all there is of worth and grace  
In ancient San’a thou wouldst see,  
Behold it in the fountain’s face  
And in the pomegranate tree.’

Sour grapes, indeed. But thus we tempered imprisonment with rhyme.

‘Draw thy shining blade, O Rhyme,  
And drink deep of the blood of Time.’

I doubt not that there was more than one man in that happy land who would have relished my own blood and that of Yanni—two followers of ‘the flat-footed Christ.’ But the Imam is, above all the qualities I have mentioned, a genius in economy. He wastes nothing, not even blood, unless the interest of the Imamdom demands it. In our case, however—Allah and he be praised!—it did not. After all, His Eminence was still our host and protector.

On the fifth day, about nine o’clock, I heard a commotion in the courtyard and I jumped, not to the door, but



to the conclusion that he was coming to see us. I put on my head-dress, therefore, and waited, waited. No one came. I walked quietly to the door of our courtyard, near which on the other side, a sentry stood, and applied the eye of longing to the chink of hope, and there, as if I were gazing into a picture machine, I stood spellbound.

There, under the Tree of Justice, was the Image of Perfection, seated on a stool, with one indigo soldier to his right bearing high the sword of State and another to his left holding over his head one of the Imamic umbrellas. Before him sat cross-legged on the ground a scribe, and around him was a crowd of people of every rank and class, in turbans and shawls of all colours as well as in rags, waiting to be heard. And everyone was heard. Quietly, the pristine scene rolled before my eye and to the satisfaction, evidently, of the Imam and the people.

Two full hours sat the Image of Perfection under the Tree of Justice, and then, forgetting that he had two captive guests only 15 yards away from him, he went on his regular daily tour of the city, preceded by a platoon of the soldiery and accompanied by a multitude of his beloved subjects. After the tour, he goes into a mosque for the noon prayer and then returns to his home for the noonday meal. His return was heralded as usual with drum and bugle, and the indigos shouted at the top of their lungs the Yo-ho-haw of the national anthem. The sky-blue and belaced *mazallah* held by a soldier marked his place in the heart of the procession.

Again he passed us by. But I was not going to wait any longer without taking some action. I sat down, therefore, and wrote to him the following letter, which was returned to me :

MOWLAY :

Allah greet you with bounty and peace. Ever since I entered your country, I have been the captive of your kindness and the subject of your favour, for which I am forever grateful ; and I now ask your



**SAN'A, THE TREE OF JUSTICE.**

Under this tree the Imam sits an hour every day to hear and redress the grievances of his subjects.

To face page 104.



forgiveness, knowing how overwhelmed you are with the affairs that accumulated during your absence, in requesting to be informed if you will grant me a private interview, and when. For I am bound to a programme in my travels, which forces me to conform, Allah willing, to its limitations in time and place. In all events, I am ever grateful to Mowlay the Imam, the Pride of Arabia and Al-Islam, Allah protect his realm and give victory to his flag.

AMEEN RIHANI.

Written on the 25<sup>th</sup> of *Shi'ban*, 1340.

The letter was returned to me with the following, in red ink, at the top of the sheet, written by the Imam himself :

Allah keep you and prosper you. We shall send for you soon, *inshallah*.

Aside from the offence, which I thought was intended, the return of the letter added to my perplexity and ill-feeling. Is this a custom of the Zioud in correspondence ? Or is it the way of the Imam with the Christians, whose things, not even a sheet of paper thereof, he desires not. I may have given rein to my feeling in an hour of doubt and trouble, but what I have seen and experienced afterwards in San'a does not wholly efface my first impression.

I was almost driven by this treatment to ask permission to leave. I was disgusted, I must admit, with everything social and political I encountered on the way—disgusted as an Arab who loves his people and desires to see them and their country out of their ruts and on the highway of progress. Disgusted and perplexed, indeed, was I even in San'a ; for after being the subject of the Imam's favour, I became the object of his doubt and suspicion.

True, the city was full of rumours about us, and the Imam was not decided what to do or say. The letter of

the Qadi Abdullah in Aden was not specific ; he spoke of me glowingly in a general Oriental manner. His Eminence, therefore, had telegraphed to find out whether we have any official connections with the British, with America, or even with King Husein, and we had to wait till he had received a reply. The single wire extends to within an hour from Mawia only, and thence the message is sent by a *hajjan*—three days from Mawia to Aden and back.

So, our case was again to be decided at Aden—Aden, which, even at this distance, could still bless or damn. But beyond Aden, up in Jeddah, was the seat of our grievance. For if King Husein were direct and specific in his letter—had he not neglected to mention my name, at least—the Imam, I am certain, would not have been so wary and suspicious. Alas, alas ! If a letter of introduction from His Hashemite Majesty is so productive of trouble, what might not a letter of warning do ?

## CHAPTER X

### THE RULE OF THE IMAM

THE Government of Al-Yaman is theocratic in root and secular in branch, but its secularity draws its power from two different sources—Arabic and Turkish, sectarian and civil. For the Turks, who tried to graft the germ of a purely civil administration upon Zaidism, succeeded in teaching the Zaidi Imam how to increase his revenue, at least, and establish a regular army; and Zaid,<sup>1</sup> whom they follow, discarded the Shi'î belief in the expected Imam. Otherwise, they could not establish a state with an Imam as its ruling head.

If they followed in the elections, however, the example of the orthodox Khalifs, the Imamate would not have been a spoil of victory. But a certain esoteric belief of the Shi'ah Batinis (mystics), from whom they separated, drove them, I think, to the opposite extreme. Said the Batinis of the Shi'ah: After the Twelfth Imam (whom they call Master of the Times),<sup>2</sup> there is no Imam. Which became a strong religious belief and engendered in the old Batini or Ismaili Governments many immunities and superstitions.

<sup>1</sup> He is Zaid Ibn Ali Ibn Husain Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the son-in-law of the Prophet. His grandfather Husain, the patron saint of the Shi'ah, was killed in battle near Karbala by the forces of the Khalif Yazid; and the Zaid fought to re-establish the Imamate which the Khalifs of Damascus had abolished. But he was persecuted and crucified.

<sup>2</sup> He is a descendant of Isma'il son of Ja'far us-Sâdeq son of Muhammad ul-Baqer (brother to Zaid) son of Ali son of Husain, etc. He appeared for a brief period on earth and disappeared in the year of the Hijrah 526 (A.D. 1131)—disappeared from the sight, but not from the heart, of his followers. Although absent, he is still present everywhere and ever living; and he shall reappear—he is the Expected Imam—to purify the world of all error and corruption.

But the Zaidis drew the sword of belief even against the Master of the Times. Said they to their opponents: If you are satisfied with an Imam who is present everywhere and is not to be seen anywhere, we, of a certainty, are not satisfied. We want an Imam who can be seen in one place, at least, and even though for a brief period of time. And they could not find in those days a better weapon than the sword to support their belief and attain their desire. Hence the dictum that 'the Imamate, after Hasan and Husain,<sup>1</sup> is the heritage of their offspring by council among them, and he of them who draws the sword to uphold the faith, and is learned and pious, is the expected Imam.'

'By council among them' is inconsistent with what follows and means nothing. But the Imamate is based upon fourteen conditions,<sup>2</sup> among which are maturity, free-birth, the ability to interpret the Koran, and bravery. These, it would seem, are sufficient to establish order at least in the state, for the first two abolish the right of inheritance, which, in the history of monarchies, especially in Al-Islam, is responsible for the profligates, the idiots, the madmen and the tyrants that occupied thrones. Moreover, they curb the ambition of black slaves—some of them still occupy high positions in the governments of Arabia—who often shook the very foundations of power and usurped the authority which they were pledged to serve.

The ability to interpret the Koran presupposes, of course, learning which, in Al-Yaman and Najd to-day, comprises the four primary branches only, *i.e.*, religion, the Hadith, jurisprudence and language. But, being elastic, the rule can be made to include other branches of

<sup>1</sup> Sons of Ali and grandsons of the Prophet from his daughter Fatimah.

<sup>2</sup> The Imam has to be (1) male, (2) free-born, (3) taxpayer, (4) sound in mind, (5) sound in all his senses, (6) sound in his ends, *i.e.*, has perfect feet and hands, (7) just, (8) pious, (9) generous, (10) of administrative ability, (11) Alawi, *i.e.*, descendant of Ali son-in-law of the Prophet, (12) Fitimā, which excludes those of the Ismaili sects, (13) brave, and (14) *mujtahid*, *i.e.*, able to interpret the Koran.

knowledge. As for bravery, to which the lawmaker adds horsemanship, no one denies it a place among the manly virtues, but it becomes a vice as soon as it is made a proof for a religious belief or a justification for a usurpation.

Were it not for this one rule, which puts the sword in place of the electorate, the fourteen conditions of the Imamate in Zaidism would have been the best palladium of law and order and peace. But, as it is, bravery and horsemanship are responsible for the conspiracies and civil wars which follow each other so closely in the land that was called happy by the Romans. We wish that its happiness were more than a tradition.

But how can any state be permanent or any public enterprise be securely established, when any descendant of the Prophet, who has a horse and a sword and a few followers, can ride into the capital upholding the faith and claiming to be Imam? There are a few of these sword-and-horse men of the Prophet's progeny in Al-Yaman to-day, and some of them are the sons and grandsons of former Imams. Nor are they idle, though they seem peaceful and submissive. They are constantly on the watch for a flaw or a weak spot in the Imam's armour, and as soon as this is seen, the sword will flash, the drum will beat, and the fire of civil war will blaze and crepitate.

I am not exaggerating, therefore, when I say that a permanent state of war, with short intervals of peace, is the prevailing condition in Al-Yaman. It was an open field always for one Saif'ul-Islam (Sword of Al-Islam) or other, during the Turkish regime.

‘The needs of life are three, my lad—  
Water, food, and the *jihad*.’

It is surprising that the fire of battle was ever extinguished. Often, however, it was only for the lack of fuel—money and ammunition. Now, we are in the



interval—a long one, considering the past—of the Imam Yahya ibn Hamid'ud-Din, who is maintaining his rule with an iron hand—with justice too—and hostages.

Little wonder, in view of the method of attaining to power I have described, that hostages are the foundation of the state. But what a foundation, even in times of war ! It is the symptom of something rotten within the Imamdom—a flaw in the mentality, an ulcer in the patriotism, of the people of Al-Yaman. He is not to blame who has to resort, in governing such a nation, to such means of control. Within the Imamdom and out of it to-day, north and west and south, in spite of the apparent peace and the security of trade routes, the Imam has many enemies. He is at open war openly with the Idrisi ; at war secretly with the Shawafe' ; at war periodically with Hashid and Bakil ; at war politically with the English—also with those Arabs around Aden who enjoy English protection—to say nothing of the Saiyeds his cousins who aspire to his place. Not at all soft is the royal couch. There is no hope there for permanent peace and prosperity in that country, except in substituting the electorate for the sword—in electing the Imam, in other words, by general suffrage according to the Sunnat of the Prophet and following the example of the orthodox Khalifs.

The Yaman of the past, even in the days of the Imam Yahya's ancestors, enjoyed a prosperity that was commensurate with its power and a prestige that did not bely its glory. I shall go back a thousand years only for an illustration ; and I shall give the reader in two or three pages at the most a gist of what is of general interest in the history of the Imamate and Zaidism.

The first missionary of Zaidism in Al-Yaman was Saiyed Yahya ibn'ul-Husain ul-Qasim ur-Rassi, who came to Sa'dah from the Iraq in the latter part of the third century of the Hijrah (tenth century A.D.), and after a few years of teaching he was called Imam. But the Imamate was



THE SCRIBE.



THE STREET

To face page 110.



first formally established at Sa'dah by Qasim ibn Muhammad, one of his descendants.

The Rassi line was not, however, continuous, because of the rule which made the Imamate a spoil of victory, and which opened the door to any one of the descendants of either Husain or Hasan—the Saiyeds or the Sherifs. The outcome of this was that Zaidism itself was split into three or four factions. One of these is the Jarudiyah, after the name of its leader Abu Jaroud, who was nicknamed Sarhoub, and Sarhoub, according to the legend, is a blind devil who lives in the sea. Another is the Sulaimaniyah, which was led by Sulaiman ibn Jarir, who made the field of battle for the Imamate so wide as to include even those who are not descendants of either Hasan or Husain. Any Muslem who answers to the other conditions is a legitimate candidate. There are other differences on questions of belief and practice between the Zaidi factions, but they are so trivial and, to non-Muslems, unmeaning. One of these, for instance, is whether the first two Khalifs Abu Bakr and Omar are to be cursed or not. The curse is obligatory, says one faction ; it is not, says another ; while the third says : Silence is best.

In the days of the first Imams, Al-Yaman was the largest principality in Arabia ; for it included within its boundaries Oman, Hadhramout, Asir and a part of Tihama, extending north as far as the Hijaz, The Imam Sharaf'ud-Din (930 H. = 1523 A.D.), the patron of a noted poet of San'a, Mouda ibn Yahya Bahran, was the conqueror of the north ; the Imam Ahmad ibn Hasan extended the frontiers of Al-Yaman south-east to Hadramout and Oman ; and the Imam Al-Mahdi Lidinillah was the first to permit Europeans to enter his country. He even invited the Frenchmen who came to Aden and Mokha (1709 A.D.) for the purpose of buying coffee, to visit him at his capital, and he entered into a treaty of friendship and commerce with them.

But the Immanate was never for a long period of a

single line, because of what has already been stated, nor was it always independent. The Carmathians, previous to the coming of the Turks, ruled for some time in Al-Yaman ; and Sultan Sulaiman, in his invasion of Arabia (1517 A.D.), established his authority in Aden and the contiguous territory. But twenty years after, the Yaman people rose against the Turks and forced them to evacuate the country. About 150 years of independence followed, and then, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the 'Amel of the Imam at Lahaj revolted and established his independent authority at Aden and over the territory which was previously occupied by the Turks. (More about this revolution when we come to the Sultans of Lahaj, Vol. II.) Fifty years or more later, the Sherif of Abu 'Arish in Tihama also declared his independence of the Zaidi Imam. (This revolution will be outlined in Vol. II., The Idrisi Section.)

As for the Turks, more than 300 years after Sultan Sulaiman occupied Aden and then abandoned it, they came back to Al-Yaman, Tewfiq Pasha in 1849, landed with a force at Hudaidah, subjected Abu 'Arish, and advanced on San'a. But he failed to establish the authority of the Dowlah in the Upper Yaman ; and not until 1872, after the Imamate had been weakened by successive revolutions, did the Turks venture again up the mountains. Nor would they have achieved any success, had not some of the Saiyeds themselves, who rose against the Imam, invited them to San'a. Brief, however, was their first occupation. For the people of Al-Yaman who revolt against the Saiyeds, and the Saiyeds who revolt against the Imam, will not submit long to a foreigner.

In 1841, therefore, they rose against the Turks and put them out of San'a ; and that was the first of a series of revolts which alternately blazed and smouldered under ashes for a quarter of a century. The one which was headed by the Imam Al-Mansour, father of the Imam

Yahya, was not successful, for Faidhy Pasha, with a force of 30,000, invested San'a and forced it to surrender. The Imam Al-Mansour retired to Sa'dah, where he died a few years later, and was succeeded by his son Yahya, who renewed in 1904 the attack upon the Turks. He besieged them in San'a for six months—made them 'cat fire and rats' *nar wa far*—and forced them in the end to an unconditional surrender. The Revolutionists supporting the Imam Yahya also triumphed in the lower Yaman. It was a great victory, and the booty, too, was great. Tons of ammunition, thousands of rifles and seventy cannons, they won from the Turks. But Ahmad Faidhy, who was then in Basrah, was sent again to Al-Yaman, and again, with a force of 50,000 this time, he invested San'a, re-occupied it, and forced the Imam to retire, like his father, to the north. Had he stopped there, his victory would have been complete. But he fell in the trap that was set for him. The Imam Yahya, in retiring to Shaharah, did not conceal from the Turks that he was almost at the end of his resources. He wanted them to follow him. They did so. And there, in the fastnesses of those hills, under the ledges of Shaharah, the army of Ahmad Faidhy was attacked with boulders as well as bullets, and annihilated, wiped out clean.<sup>1</sup> A truce was then agreed upon, which lasted but a few years.

For in 1911, after six long years of peace, the tribes, thirsty for war, once more surrounded San'a. But the victory of 1904-05 could not be repeated. Izzet Pasha, a man of discernment and eloquence and generosity, was at that time Vali of Al-Yaman, and Turkey was on the eve of war with Italy. So, Izzet Pasha employed all his personal and official resources in the interest of peace. He would prevent the Imam from joining, at least, the enemy of the Dowlah, as did the Idrisi.

<sup>1</sup> See footnote p. 88.

Izzat succeeded. In the Treaty of 1911, which was made for a period of ten years, the Imam acknowledged the sovereignty of the Dowlah in Al-Yaman, and the Dowlah agreed to respect the Shar' (Koranic) Courts, whose judges were appointed by the Imam, and to pay monthly stipends to the Imam, to the Saiyeds, and to the Chiefs of Hashid and Bakil.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, because the Zioud, according to one of their tenets, are not obliged to pay the *zakat* except to their Imam, it was agreed that the officials of the Dowlah shall collect it for him. Which they did; and they delivered the money to him, after deducting 2½ per cent. for their services.

After this Treaty was signed, the Imam retired to Khamir in Shaharah, where he remained till the end of the world war, and the Dowlah continued for three years to pay him and his men the monthly stipends and to collect for him the *zakat*-money. When it joined the Central Powers, however, the stipends were discontinued, but the friendly relations did not cease. The Imam's attitude, nevertheless, was neutral. He did not help the Turks, neither against his enemy the Idrisi in Tihama nor against the English in Aden. When the British Residency at Aden tried to enlist his support against the Turks, he excused himself on the ground that he had a treaty with them. Colonel Jacob, who was then First Assistant to the Resident, speaks of the informal negotiations<sup>2</sup> in his book, *Kings of Arabia*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The monthly stipends were as follows :—

The Imam, 3,000 Turkish Pounds.

The Saiyeds, or political bosses, 1,200 T.P.

The Chiefs of the two tribes of Hashid and Bakil, 1,300 T.P.

<sup>2</sup> 'After the entry of the Turks (into the war) the Imam sent his envoy Muhammad Ali Sherif to Lahaj to discover the mind of the English Government. I interviewed the envoy in the presence of Sir Ali (the Sultan of Lahaj). The Imam's argument was as follows : He pleaded his inability to break faith with the Turks, with whom he had in 1911 made a ten-year truce.'—Harold F. Jacob, *Kings of Arabia*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> A coincidence of titles. His book, which was published in London a few months before the *Kings of Arabia* (in Arabic) was published in

The Imam Yahya is of the line of Ar-Rassy, the first missionary of Zaidism in Al-Yaman. His father, who was the Mufti of San'a and a man of great influence and benevolence, was elected Imam and called Al-Mansour—the Victor—although he did not fight for the Imamate. But when Yahya succeeded him in 1902, there were a few rivals in the field, among them Saiyed Ahmad ibn Hamid'ud-Din, known as Adh-Dhihyani, who still lives. After the armistice was declared, when the Imam moved from Sa'dah southward, his rivals were astir again, and some of them sought the assistance even of those who have not always been friendly to Al-Yaman. They wrote to King Husein, to the Idrisi, and to the British Residence at Aden, denouncing the Imam and enlisting their support against him. They even sent a delegation, which went by way of Ma'rib to Aden and was to proceed thence to Al-Hijaz ; but the British authorities stopped all its members and compelled them to return whence they came. Of all the strange incidents connected with this campaign or conspiracy that were related to me, the strangest and most amusing is that the Imam Yahya's gold got ahead of the delegation to Aden and induced certain officials at the Residency to thwart its progress.

It was Mahmoud Bey Nadim, the last Vali of Al-Yaman, who received the Imam Yahya at San'a and delivered to him the reins of power. Since then, retaining Nadim Bey as an adviser and the 300 odd soldiers and officers to leaven his regular army, he ruled with an iron hand. He employed the Austrian Christian 'Georgy' as superintendent of his cartridge factory, and he invoked the creed of his ancestors against the Shawafe' (Sunnis) of Tihama as well as against the Idrisi. These, ya Zioud, are worse heretics than the Turks, and the *jihad* must

Beirut, treats only of Al-Yaman and Asir. Colonel Jacob says (p. 234) that he got his inspiration for the title from 'the Septuagint version of the seventy-second Psalm.' I got mine from the Kings of Arabia themselves.



continue—a *jihad*, alas ! of one party of the Prophet's followers against another.

The Imam Yahya, who is now sixty-three years of age, has four legal wives (one of whom is the daughter of Ibn'ul-Mutawakkil, once his rival for the Imamate), who have given him thirty-four children. But only sixteen live, and of these, five girls are already married, and four boys, Muhammad the eldest, surnamed Saif'ul-Islam, Al-Mutahhar, Al-Qasim and Al-Husain, are officers in the army. Scarcely any of the children of an Imam ever escape the service, whether obligatory (regular) or voluntary (the *jihad*).

The twenty-seven years of his reign now, barring an interregnum of seven, when he made peace with the Turks, have, indeed, been a continuous *jihad*, actual and political—a chain of wars and truces. To make children and to make war would seem to be the business of an Imam—the business of a Yamani, in truth. But consider the nation that would soon rise in this Yaman, if the health of the race and the health of the state were of a high standard. The population, 3,000,000, which is now stationary, would more than double itself in ten years, and that means more production—only about a third of Al-Yaman is cultivated to-day—and less taxation.

I am also of the belief that if the Imam Yahya's rule were not sectarian, were purely civil, he would realize his highest political ambition without having to wage war, and call it a *jihad*, against his fellow Muslims. The Shawafe' would then have no grievance against him—would cease to be a weapon in the hands of his enemies—would, in fact, become his greatest supporters. As it is, whatever we may say of his impartial justice and benevolence, the Shawafe' are discontented ; and of their grievances against his Government, one of the worst seems to be that it sells out to private individuals, as did the Turks, the right to collect the taxes and the *zakat*. Thus, the

tyranny is doubled. For the '*ashshar*, or tithe-farmer, who is squeezed once, has to squeeze twice or he is a loser. In the Ottoman Empire especially, the '*ashshar* was as popular as the executioner, and he cannot be any better or worse in Al-Yaman.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARMS AND THE TAXES

OFTEN in Jeddah, when Husein ibn Ali was king, have I heard people speak of Pan-Arabism, a United Arabia, an Arab Empire, and refer to Al-Yaman as if it were a district of Al-Hijaz and to the Imam Yahya as if he were a subject of His Hashemite Majesty. Often, too, in Aden have I heard people say that a few aeroplanes of the English could scatter the Zioud, annihilate the army of the Imam, and shatter his dream of Pan-Islam. But we have also heard the Ameers of the Imam's army, and we have seen some of the material, at least, of which that army is made. Be it also said that Aden is too partial to see straight in the matter and Jeddah is too far to hear right. Indeed, distance as well as politics separates the different principalities of Arabia, and the truth—if so it be—which is circulated in one part of the country about another, is either coloured and distorted, or misinterpreted and misunderstood. A traveller who hears Ibn'ul-Wazir at Mawia or Zamar, for instance, haranguing about the sword of the Prophet and Al-Islam, will carry the words to Al-Hijaz as if they were an official declaration. Or he may hear one of the sensible officials of the Imam speak with wisdom and moderation on the state of things in the Imamdom, and he will report his opinions as if they were expressed by the Imam himself. There is no doubt that something of the personality, though not of the purpose, of the Imam, is reflected in both ; but the policy of the Imamdom is guided neither by the one nor the other.

The Imam Yahya knows, not only the real worth of every factor in the forces that serve his political ambition,

but also its relative value with regard to time and place. He has the wisdom and farsightedness to countenance both the philosopher and the firebrand, and he has the cunning and the courage to discredit them both when necessary. He wanted, for instance, Hudaidah on the Red Sea—he wanted the English to cede it to him. So he let his military Junkers in the south clamour for Aden. We can take Aden in a week—let us march on Aden ! Let the Ingliz and the Idrisi have Hudaidah—we want Aden. Head of the Imam ! We'll have Aden, and we'll throw the Ingliz in the sea ! But the Imam, who would not interfere with his soldiers' freedom of speech, lets 'Arashy proceed with his negotiations, and when word comes that the echo of Let-us-march-on-Aden has reached the British Residency, he parts his pouting lips in a smile, and goes to meet his petitioners under the Tree of Justice

There is no doubt that the Imam Yahya is one of the two most powerful Arab rulers of to-day, the other being Ibn Sa'oud. But his power, all of it, is from within ; for he depends upon no one outside his country for money. Barring the stipends which he and his Saiyeds received from Turkey for a brief period of three years, he accepts none—he has not yet—from any government, European or Oriental. When I say that his power is from within, I do not mean that it is purely national or purely sectarian. No ; his military and political strength is not confined in the Zioud, who are only a third of his subjects,<sup>1</sup> nor in the Arabs of Al-Yaman, whose tribal spirit, as I have shown, is hopelessly denationalizing. But he derives considerable strength from both.

His power as a ruler has, in fact, three foundations, *i.e.*, sectarian zeal, native pride, and national isolation. But his personal qualities, while deriving nourishment

<sup>1</sup> The Imam rules about three million of the Arabs of Al-Yaman ; one million of which are Zioud, 20,000 Jews, and the rest are Shawafe' or Shafi'i Sunnis.

from these three sources, are not wholly moulded or bound by them. For although of a secretive nature, he can be, when he deems necessary, open and direct, and although a Zaidi, he accepts the present of an automobile from the English, rides in it to the Grand Mosque, and permits his army to be photographed,<sup>1</sup> and although democratic in his private life, he likes the military ostentation amidst which he makes his daily tour through the city, and enjoys watching the great pageant from the window of his *majlis* every Friday afternoon.

His greatest power, however—I had almost said his greatest virtues—is in his isolation—his mental and spiritual as well as his national isolation—and for this reason, I think, he can be autocratic in rule, without being so in manner. Indeed, a child of both a religious autocracy and a religious culture, he can be a counsellor and consoler as well as a tyrant. By consequence, too, he is naïve, and his self-confidence might have been as amazing and amusing as King Husein's, were it not for that practical wisdom which guides his actions, if not always his words. For consider that no hand has ever been above his, and no word has ever been esteemed superior to his own. In an apotheosis, mere concession is a virtue, and in isolation, which presupposes self-sufficiency, even an empty scabbard is a powerful weapon. For the sword itself might be at the armourer's shop or with the executioner, and there is virtue in cultivating the conjecture. But contact with the world and the necessity of dealing with others—the fencing for room, the struggle for prestige, the fight for supremacy—these do not teach a higher morality. When in human intercourse, however, the speech that is used to conceal the mind becomes a habit, as in King Husein, the brusque gesture of the Imam Yahya or (by association of ideas)

<sup>1</sup> The Imam has never been photographed. He will not permit it. But once he acceded to the wish of one of his Turkish friends in that he allowed him to take a picture of *his sword only*.

the Get-out of a flat-footed American is worthy of being counted among the virtues.

All of which, in speaking of arms, I count among the weapons of the present ruler of Al-Yaman. Indeed, his army might fail him at times, but seldom his heritage. Yet, we have seen how, without the aid of European specialists, he is creating a regular army. Detachments of it have welcomed us on the way from Mawia, and in San'a, on a Friday afternoon, we witnessed the review of a whole regiment, complete in its personnel and material. The artillery was drawn by mules, the Turkish officers rode horses, and while the Zioud infantry were goose-stepping before us, the steeds of the cavalry were dancing to the strains of a brass band of thirty pieces. Moreover, among the infantry we saw a company in yellow, instead of blue, tunics. They were the students of the military college—the Arab officers of the future.

As for arms, the Imam has every variety of rifle,<sup>1</sup> old and new, most of which have been won from the enemies of Al-Yaman, while some were imported through Djebuti or Mosawwa, or bought from the people of Asir. As for ammunition, the cartridge factory at the Palace Ghamdan,<sup>2</sup> which is superintended by the Austrian 'Georgy' and is always in operation, turns out four cases of 1,000 each a day. The lead is imported, and the saltpetre is dug out of the Yaman soil; but there is no fear of the supply of material giving out, even if all of it has to come from abroad, while the contrabandists continue to ply between the coasts of Eritrea and Asir. Considering these resources in arms and ammunition, therefore, the notion that the Imam can arm 300,000 of the Zioud alone, seems credible. But, other things

<sup>1</sup> It is said that he has 400,000 rifles, but a lot of it is old and useless to-day. Of the different cannons, he has 200. I have seen in the artillery, on the day of the review, two mortar guns.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing of the ancient palace of Ghamdan, famous in the history, the poetry and the legends of Arabia, exists to-day. The present structure, on the site of the old, is called the *Qasr* (palace), and in it are the jail, the mint, and the cartridge factory.

considered, principally the general discontent, I do not think that his regular army of 5,000 can be raised to more than 35,000, while the *mujahidin* (volunteers) can scarcely be made to exceed that number.

In any event, it is a considerable force for Al-Yaman, and the Imam's subjects have a right to repeat the song of the English Jingoës : We've got the guns, we've got the men, we've got the money too. I have been an eye-witness of the first two sinews of war, and I have heard many stories about the third, which call to mind the tales of hidden and guarded treasures of childhood days. Of a truth, the Imam is rich, very rich. In every one of his houses in Bir'ul-'Azab he has a chest of gold, and that is why, I was told, the night guards, who never sleep, are ever exchanging the password and the word of peace. Besides, he has in Shaharah, up in the mountain summits there, secret treasures, the whereabouts of which is only known to himself, and should the path to a treasure-place be discovered, the door of it is only known to himself ; and should the stone that locks the treasure be discovered, the secret of making it yield to human power or ingenuity is only known to himself. Marvellous, in sooth, are the tales that are told about the treasures of the Imam Yahya. But I shall not spoil this chapter with fairy tales. Mahmoud Bey Nadim told me that Muhammad Saif'ul-Islam (the Imam's eldest son) said to him one day : ' I wish I could get that little black book which father carries in the pocket of his innermost garment—close to his skin.' Aye, in that notebook are recorded the amounts and the places of all his secret treasures.

But let us, in spite of all that, stick to the facts, which we find in the taxes and which prove the accumulated wealth of the Imam. For he is, in this, like the Christian clergy : he takes, but he does not give. In the days of the Dowlah the people of Al-Yaman paid the *zakat* only. The tribesmen were even exempt from it. But to-day—you have heard the complaint of the soldier and the

farmer, which are representative, and I shall now give you, from the mouth of an old man, what may be the gist of the pros and cons in the matter. But first about the man who was called Abu Frak (Father of the Frock Coat), and whose strange sartorial make-up did not tell me whether he was a soldier, a farmer, or a Saiyed. The frock coat, a souvenir of the Dowlah—once the hope of some poor *kaimakam* who must have ordered it for an official reception while tuft-hunting in Stamboul—was glossy with age, frayed and faded like an antique rug, with black and white buttons, and a patch on the breast that looked like a decoration—a coat upon which Time (in the frayed and faded phrase of the Arab poets) had eaten and slept. And it was, as usual, big enough for two. Hence the sash with which he tightened it at the waist, and which was reinforced by the belt of his *jam-biyah* (dagger), around whose hilt he wound a rosary of black coral. Instead of a rifle, he carried a staff, and in his turban, which was in keeping with the coat, he sported a sprig of sweet basil.

‘What is your profession?’ I asked. ‘The profession of the generous,’ he replied.

‘And will you be generous with more information?’

‘We give, but we do not receive.’

‘I am still in a darkness which, I hope, you will illumine.’

‘Wilt thou have it in the language of the Faqih?’<sup>1</sup>

‘In a language, I pray, which I can understand.’

‘Our life is a gift from Allah, and we give it to the Imam. We neither lose nor gain.’

‘And there are many ways of giving?’

He smiled and pointed to his breast. ‘They are all here. I am in the inception, as the Faqih says—what does the Faqih say? He says: “I am in the inception a spirit bent upon evil.” But in me are three and they are all

<sup>1</sup> One who is learned in the law; but in Al-Yaman he may be a law student or a pedagogue, in either case an object of ridicule and scorn.



good. I am, ya Effendy, one-third sheikh, one-third farmer, one-third soldier, and all in one a Saiyed.' He paused, changed his seating posture, and continued.

'Yes, I am a Saiyed, although the Sadat deny it. But more in part than in whole was my usefulness. The first third of me served the Imam as a collector of the *zakat*. I collected it with this.' He shook his staff. 'And I collected it in *zalat*, in cattle, in grain and coffee (tithes), even in fruit. But I have never tasted, *wallah!* of the fruits collected. Nor is there on my hand or on my conscience a drop of blood from a sheep or a pigeon. All for the Imam. . . . The second third of me paid the *zakat*—I paid it gladly and piously. Never have I cast a stone at the '*ashshar* (tithe-farmer), nor did I ever hide the pigeons from his cormorant eyes. The last third of me, ya Effendy, carried the *bunduq* for the Imam and opened the fire of many a battle. Here is the proof—two proofs.' He showed me a scar on his shoulder and another on his leg. And not a *bugsha*<sup>1</sup> in my pocket when I came back home. No, *billah!* . . . Five *reals*, that is the monthly due. But the real is of silver, and the eye sees only the copper. They pay us in *bugshas*—six *bugshas* a day. The rest is for the Imam. . . . I was a *mujahid* (volunteer) and I had to pay for the *ghat* out of my own purse. The *nazam* (regular) soldiers are supplied with *ghat* and grain. But the *mujahidin*, Allah must supply them. . . . Six *bugshas* a day! and the *zalat* (silver and gold) is all saved, saved for the great day. . . . We say to the Imam: "One of the conditions of the Imamate is generosity." And he replies: "One of the conditions of generosity is the right thing in the right place." He knows more than we, of course. He is all-knowing. . . . Of a certainty, the Imam looks into the future with two eyes. His purpose is big, very big. It includes us all—we are all for the Imam. We give, always we give, and we ask for nothing.

<sup>1</sup> A *bugsha* is a copper piece, with the Imam's name on it, struck in San'a, and the Marie Theresa real or dollar is divided into eighty *bugshas*.

That which he is pleased to give, we take, and we are thankful. Life is the gift of Allah, and we give it to the Imam. This is the truth, which you have now heard from the lips of a Saiyed. Yes, I am now a Saiyed, because I serve the Imam only in words.'

Two of his gestures as he spoke were as expressive as his words. In the one the three middle fingers were closed, while the index and the little finger stuck out like the horns of a snail—a symbol of the indicative mood. In the second, the palms were brushed against each other, once only, but lightly and quickly—a gesture of finality. Life is a gift from Allah, which we give to the Imam. And with a stroke of the palms the gift is sealed.

But the whole truth is that the burden of taxation is very heavy and the complaint is general. Few are they who, like this genial and generous Saiyed, look upon life as a gift, freely gotten and freely to be given away. Few are they who pay the taxes gladly—and piously. The *zakat* money, yes. But in the Yaman of the Imam Yahya ibn Hamid'ud-Din, the *zakat* has as many ramifications as an octopus. The tithes, collected in kind, cereals, coffee included; the tithes, collected in cash, on perishable products, including *ghat*; the tithes on cattle and all domestic animals, in kind or in cash, whichever is more profitable to the state; the tithes, also, on commerce and industry—these are added to the *zakat*, which originally included them all. But even the *zakat* is multiple. For in addition to the 2½ per cent. of the yearly income,<sup>1</sup> there is what is called 'the *zakat* of the body,' paid in the month of Ramadhan, together with 'the *zakat* of jewels' (of the harim), as well as that of the *jihad* (war subscription) whenever it is called for. Besides all these taxations, there is the tribute, although small,<sup>2</sup> which is paid by the Jews.

<sup>1</sup> The original *zakat* amounts to 500,000 reals, or 50,000 pounds sterling a year.

<sup>2</sup> The rich Jew pays three reals a year; a Jew of the middle class, two; and the poor pay only one, or 2s.

The tithes in kind are deposited in Bait'ul-Mal (Government Store), which has a branch in every district, and whose stock of wheat, corn, coffee and other cereals is not touched without an order from the Imam. Cases of theft or secret sales are very rare, for the hostages insure not only loyalty, but also honesty and trust. One of the virtues of Bait'ul-Mal is that it lends of the necessities of life to those in need, on condition that they be returned, without interest, however, the following season.

Otherwise, the proceeds of the Government Stores, which are paid to the Imam, remain almost intact. The budget is not dependent upon them ; for there are two other sources of revenue—the custom duties on all goods coming from Aden and from Asir, and the tax on the caravans—which are sufficient to meet the expenditures of the Government. But the Bait'ul-Mal and its proceeds, no hand, honest or dishonest, ever dares to touch ; everything is amassed and saved—saved by the help of Allah (and the hostages) for the Expected Day. The Kaiser of the Arabs is the Imam. The Germans of the Arabs are the Zioud.

## CHAPTER XII

### SPIRITUAL TRAITS

My companion Constantine had a servant named Madani, a boy from Morocco, who was brought up in the service of the Sherifs at Mecca. Hence, I suppose, his violent and overbearing manner. But Madani the cantankerous was also unbreakable. His capital in life seemed to consist of a head of iron and a tongue of steel. Indeed, he was the amusement and the miracle of our caravan. He was also a proof that viciousness is magnetic; for he and his mount, whether a mule or a camel or a donkey, were always of a piece. They seemed to collaborate for our amusement, and thus many a moment of alarm would merrily end.

There goes Madani heeling over his packs on his runaway mule. Lo, the packs are on the ground, Madani is on his head, and the mule's hind legs are up in the air. But the demon of danger was impotent. For Madani would jump to his feet laughing, though the curses fall thick from his lips, and riding again over his packs he would hold his head in the air like a great Saiyed. An impenitent boy, a violent and cantankerous boy. He was, moreover, as abusive as the man in Homer's *Iliad*. Not one of those that accompanied us escaped his tongue. He quarrelled with a man on the second hour of acquaintance, and came to us with a report upon him, and a warning.

But when we arrived at San'a, Madani was the first to go to the Souq, and he came back, contrary to his habit, with honey-words on his lips. Praise be to Allah, the city of San'a pleased Madani. He even preferred it to

Jeddah. 'Do you not prefer it also to Mecca,' I asked. 'No, *wallah*,' he replied. 'And why?' 'Because in Mecca is *ummi* (my mother).' This and trustworthiness were, I had thought, the boy's only virtues. But his eye could be attracted as well to spiritual things, and his tongue could report faithfully upon them. For one day he returned from the city in an ecstasy of delight. 'I have seen the Imam,' he said. '*Wa-ummi* (by my mother)! And I have kissed his hand.'

'Where did you see him?'

'He is sitting in the Square, and around him are men and women and children. When he saw me, he said: "Allah greet the comer." And he rose from his chair, *wallah! wa-ummi!* and gave me his hand. I kissed it. He then asked my name, and said: "Art thou a Muslem or a Christian?" "A Muslem, praise be to Allah," I replied. "Be thou blessed," he said. *Wallah, wa-ummi!* he greeted me first. I have never seen a better than he and a kinder than he. A great man—and just. *Wa-ummi!* there is no one in all Arabia more just than he. He is now sitting in the Square, hearing the complaints of the people. Ya Imam, ya Imam! They address him like a father. A boy came crying when I was there, and the Imam, seeing him, said: "Make room for him—let him come near me. His tears are more eloquent and truthful than any of you. Come, my child." *Wa-ummi!* I speak but the truth. . . . I do not think there is a better Imam in all Arabia.'

These are the most pleasing words of Madani's during our Yaman journey. Overlooking his own impression, however, I would consider the bare facts. The Imam rose from his chair to greet the boy, knowing him to be our servant. But he did not know whether he was a Muslem or a Christian. Which makes his act more humble and noble. It makes it, too, more perplexing. For why should he receive us at his *majlis* sitting, and why rise in public to greet our servant? The perspicacity of the reader may

relish the mystery which I have tried, but failed, to fathom.

The second fact is that he heard the cry of a child, which he preferred before the complaints of men and women. First, the children. In this fact alone is sufficient praise of his spiritual qualities. But it, too, is perplexing. That this great Arab and descendant of the Prophet, who spoke with malice of the Christ, should resemble the Christ in sympathy and compassion ! Let the little children come unto Me. From the lips of a Zaidi Muslem fall the pearls of Thy love, and in Al-Yaman is heard the echo of Thy words, O Thou divine and humble Nazarene. But there is smallness even in our broader exclusiveness ; there is a parochialism, I would say, in thinking that the higher spiritual truth is confined to the Christians and the Zioud.

I myself have witnessed what confirms the story of Madani. More than once, even during our incarceration, have I seen the Imam sitting for one or two hours at a stretch, without once raising his voice. Attentively, patiently, cheerfully, compassionately, he heard and judged. But a few cases, which required legal consideration, were referred to a court of justice.

This custom of holding open court is older even than Al-Islam in Arabia ; but it was popularized by the Orthodox Khalifs, and a few of the rulers of Arabia to-day still maintain the tradition. In San'a, as we have seen, it is nobly upheld in practice. But there is a reason. Some of the guards at the doors of the Imam, yielding to the temptation of *zalat*, sometimes admit into the *majlis* a man less deserving than those who had long been waiting to be heard. Rather than punish the guards, therefore, it is easier to remove them, relieve them of service, one or two hours a day, at which time no one shall stand between the Imam and the people. Even after the daily session, under the Tree of Justice or in the Square, he continues, on his tour through the city, to receive petitions.

The open-air tribunal becomes a circular court. Thus is spent one-half of his day ; the other half he devotes to the affairs of State. After dinner and an hour's rest, he comes to the *majlis*—to his office, rather—where he transacts business till sunset and sometimes till late in the evening.

This is the daily routine, except Friday, which he devotes to contemplation and prayer—and to the military review. Also to reading ; for His Eminence is a book lover, too, a collector rather of ancient manuscripts. His library, all in MS., is the biggest, I was told, in all Arabia. But he is most jealous of it ; no outside eye or hand has ever seen or touched a single volume of the precious collection. I am also told—and I set it down as I have the story of the treasures—that the famous book *Al-Iklil*<sup>1</sup> is only found, complete in its ten volumes, in the library of the Imam, and that some day, *inshallah*, when the printing press, in its slow Arab journey, reaches San'a, it will be given in book form to the world.

The Imam himself is not in a hurry about it. Nor is he as interested, it seems, in the promulgation of knowledge as he is in the dispensation of justice. But a king or a ruler, according to his view, ought to be educated, to avoid, at least, 'the disgrace of having to receive people who know more than he does.' The children of a king and, in Al-Yaman, the Saiyeds, any one of whom

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Iklil*, by Hasan ibn Ahmad' ul-Hamdani, is a history of the ancient Yaman in ten volumes, which are supposed to be scattered in the various National Libraries of Europe. Arabists and collectors set a high value upon them. I have seen a copy from the original of Vol. VIII., and from it I transcribe the titles of the different volumes, which are as follows :—

Vol. I., Genealogy. Vol. II., The Line of Himya 'ibn Himyar. Vol. III., The Characteristics of Qahtan. Vol. IV., Ancient History down to the Days of Tubba' ibn Abi Karib. Vol. V., From the Days of As' ad Tubba' to the Days of Zu'n-Nawwas. Vol. VI., Modern History down to Al-Islam. Vol. VII., A Warning against False or Defective Annals. Vol. VIII., The Palaces and the Treasures of Himyar. Vol. IX., Proverbs and Sayings in the Himyar Language. Vol. X., Note worthy People of Hamdan and Hashid and Bakil.

might be eligible to the royal couch, are included in this dictum.

Their education, although very limited in its courses, is intended to improve the body and the soul, besides the mind ; for, in addition to language, law and religion, the students are taught archery, horsemanship and swimming. It seems incredible that a people 8,000 feet above the sea and 300 miles from it, should be fond of swimming and be able to enjoy the exercise in San'a. But there are pools in the granges outside the city, which are also used for this purpose, and the fountains are often big enough to serve for teaching the children. There is no balance, however, even in this form of what I might call higher education. The soul always tips the beam, and so would the body, were it not for the emaciating effects of *ghat*.

Too much religion and too much *ghat*—and no public schools whatever. But because of the mosque-schools, which are open to the children of the people as well as of the nobility, the percentage of illiteracy in Al-Yaman is small. There is also, because of this, a strong and widespread desire for education. But the Saiyeds would monopolize the higher forms of it, which is one reason why they are hated by the people ; and the Faqihs do not make good teachers, which is often why they are ridiculed.

The children are, as a rule, very intelligent, and the Arab mind, in spite of centuries of neglect, is still keen and bright. One of the boys I spoke with deplored the fact that the schools, ever since the Turks left the country, have been closed. But he found an excuse for the Imam. ' From the time he took hold of the reins of power until this day, he has been at war with the enemies of Al-Yaman.'

' Do you like Al-Yaman ? '

' And is there anyone who likes not his own country ? '

' But do you not like to travel ? '



'We are not forced, Allah be praised, to seek a living outside our country.'

'But travel is educating and interesting.'

'What we have is sufficient for a living only.'

Another boy, about twelve years of age, also deplored the passing of the Turk, but only because the school was open in his day. 'We had regular schools, where we were taught geography and arithmetic. And they used to give us books and slates and paper and ink and pens and pencils for nothing.' This boy was down on the Faqih, who, he said, 'is not worth a curse. He gets twelve reals a month to teach the Koran. But he sleeps in the mosque with the book in his hand. He is lazy, and he is greedy, and he is wicked. If I had money I would open a school and dismiss the Faqih. I would also give books and paper and ink and slates and chalks to the children for nothing.'

'But why,' I asked, 'does not the Imam open the schools? The Imam is very rich.'

'That is true. But . . . ' And he held out a closed hand. 'Do you understand?'

He did not mean that the Imam had money for war, but not for education. No; he meant what his gesture expressed. The Imam is close-fisted.

'And has he many books?'

'*Khairat*' (very many).

'And is he very learned?'

'I wish I had that much'—he drew the tips of his fingers together—'of his learning.'

Another boy said that he was going to be a soldier after he was educated—'after I acquire knowledge.'

'But what is the use of knowledge,' I asked, 'when you would continue the war against your fellow countrymen? The Arabs are all descendants from the same ancestor. Qahtan and Adnan are brothers. The Muslems, too, are brothers.'

'You are right. But the Imam knows more than we

do. When he says War, it is war. We will always fight for the Imam. And he knows better than anyone else the Book and the Sunnat and what is obligatory upon the Muslemin. . . . Allah has enjoined upon us the *jihad*.'

This boy, who spoke so dogmatically about the *jihad* and the fight for the Imam, was not yet in his teens. He was, nevertheless, one of the million blind followers, who consider the Imam as infallible and supreme. Indeed, to the million Zioud, at least, no matter how much they suffer from his grinding rule, the Imam is the lord of war and peace—he is the master of the sword and the pen—he is *the* teacher and he is *the* judge. Of all of which I have given the reader the illustration and the proof.

But I have not yet even alluded to one of the most important of his many professions. The Imam Yahya is also a healer—a man of miraculous power.

One of those he treated told me that for a whole year his head would 'shake and ache,' and neither cauterization nor blood letting, nor all the herbs of the Bedu, could stop it from shaking and aching. But one day a friend told him of the Imam, to whom he came for treatment, and His Eminence, who refuses no one afflicted with pain, gave him a sacred potion and sent him away saying: 'By the grace of Allah, thou art cured.' He swore by the head of the Imam, and he held up his own head, held it still. 'It does not shake, praise be to Allah, and it does not ache.'

The son of the good 'Amel of Ibb suffered for many months from 'a hidden disease,' the nature and the cause of which only Allah knew. But his father sent him eventually to the Imam, who gave him one treatment only, and he was straightway cured. The method of His Eminence is simple. He takes a piece of paper, writes on it a saying from the Koran, places it in a cup of water, prays over it, and gives the Koranic potion to the patient to drink. After which: 'Go home. Thou art, by the grace of Allah, cured.' These are two of the

many stories I have heard about the healing incantations of the Imam.

Another power associated with this, or arising, in what may be called a negative form, from it, is the *tashwir*,<sup>1</sup> which, however, he exercises but rarely and reluctantly. I give an example. Some of the soldiers demanded more pay, and they wanted silver instead of coppers. They got neither. Therefore they mutinied, and they came clamouring down Shararah Square to the Palace. The Imam appeared in the window, spoke to them gently, and advised them to go back to their regiment. They would not do so, unless their demand was granted. He advised them again, but they would not yield. Whereupon he said: 'I do not want you, I do not need you. Go back to your homes, and *be ye accursed!*' The soldiers went away. But not one of them could sleep or eat from the confusion that was in him. A week later, they all came back and begged to be forgiven and reinstated.

Another case is that of some recalcitrant Bedu who had been pestering him with demands, and who came one afternoon in an insistent and defiant mood. But the Imam would not see them. Turned away from the door, they stood outside, under the window of the *majlis*, and continued their clamours. 'Hear us, ya Imam! Speak to us from the window, ya Imam!' His Eminence appeared in the window, and while he was rebuking them, a gun was fired at him. The Bedu held back their rash companion, who, having missed, would shoot again. 'Let him be,' said the Imam. 'His bullet between his eyes before the setting of the sun.'

The Bedu went back to the city still clamouring their complaints, and the would-be assassin sat down outside the city gate to reflect upon his course. He held his rifle between his knees, muzzle upward. But he dozed while

<sup>1</sup> The *tashwir* is the power to injure at a distance. 'This power,' says the lexicographer, 'is only manifested in the Saiyeds of Arabia.'

reflecting, and suddenly, as he awoke with a jerk, his gun went off, and the bullet struck him in the forehead, between the eyes, before the setting of the sun !

It is most noble of the Imam, one would think that he does not give the *tashwir* to the Idrisi in Jaizan or to the English in Aden.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CLOUDS HAVE LIFTED

To travel slowly, leisurely, primitive-fashion, in a country little known to the world, even though you break your spine on the back of a mule going up and down its rugged mountains, is the only way of gathering knowledge and correcting impressions. On the road from Lahaj to San'a we were a living, moving, question mark—moving like a snail and only half living, to be sure—half dead from fatigue and discomfort. But the Question Mark, nevertheless, seldom ceased to function well. In fact, all we had to do in certain places was to stand, silent and patient, at the door of the inn, and they would come to us, the disgruntled and discontented as well as those who glory in the Image of Perfection who is now directing the affairs of Al-Yaman. When we arrived at San'a, therefore, we had already gathered a wealth of information about the country, its ruler and its people, some of which, after a careful sifting, I have used in the preceding chapters. But I must here remark that this information, in its essence, has a double significance—the one reflecting the strength of the Zioud, the other betraying the weakness which lurks in that strength.

The Imam, we have seen, is all in all, and his power, as well as that of his people, is now based upon three foundations—namely, religion, race and isolation. Their religion, or Zaidism, I have nothing to do with, but their idea of race will be broadened by education, and their isolation, in these days of wireless telegraphy and aviation, cannot long endure. What will follow?

The weakness of the Zioud is in their ignorance and

backwardness, when compared with any other Muslem or Arab-speaking people. Indeed, the Egyptian, the Syrian, even the Iraqi, travelling in Al-Yaman, will find himself carried back of a sudden to the third century of the Hijrah. Not a school, not a newspaper, not a printing press, not a doctor, not a hospital anywhere in the country. The Imam, like the ancient priest, is everything—the teacher, the doctor, the judge. In this capacity, however, he is behaving, I must say, better than the ancient priests. He is at least honest in his healing incantations, and he is moreover an upright judge. But this praiseworthy paternalism is not complete. For if he is watchful of the souls of his children, and jealous of their rights, and not wholly unconcerned about their health, he is, alas, woefully neglectful of their minds. This is one of the crying defects of his rule.

A lover of the Arabs, a lover of humanity, in fact, cannot but deprecate the power which arises from isolation. It makes for the social and political conditions that exist to-day in Al-Yaman. On the other hand, if, as I have said, that power cannot long endure, I should deprecate its disappearance, before education comes to take its place. Indeed, the relations between the Imam and all the other Arab rulers, especially those in the western half of the Peninsula, can be improved, strengthened, and made enduring only by education. But the economic and commercial relations between the Yaman and Aden, which are most essential, can be established and made secure only by a friendly attitude towards the English and an understanding with them upon certain rights and interests on a basis of reciprocity.

Twelve days of travel and ten days of captivity for study developed and strengthened this belief in me. When I left New York I had no belief or opinion on the subject; no preconceived ideas did I bring with me; and had I found the people of Al-Yaman like the Egyptians, for instance, or, at least, like the people of Al-Iraq,

my talk with the Imam might have been different than what is here set down.

Besides, there was the question of Hudaidah, which, to the Imam, was more important than schools and economic enterprises—more important even than a treaty with the King of Al-Hijaz. Hudaidah, the port of Al-Yaman on the Red Sea, was nominally in the hand of the Idrisi, practically in the hand of the English ; and the Imam could not sleep at ease until it became again an integral part of his own dominion. It was at that time the great political question of Al-Yaman, and I shall give an account of it in another chapter.

But to resume now the story of our captivity. Our own relations with the Imam, thanks to the power that sweeps doubt out of the heart of man, were improving ; for on the morning of the seventh day, after our first interview, a soldier came in to say that our own dwelling was soon to be honoured by the Noble Presence. It was, indeed, a moment of joy ; for the Imam would not come in person to see us had he not been fully assured, and, I was also pleased to think, had he not experienced a twinge of conscience concerning us.

We covered our heads and hastened to meet him outside. Nothing distinguished him from other Saiyeds but the ends of his white turban. For he wore the usual caftan of white cotton, yellow-stripped cloth, and girded himself with a plain worsted *jambiyah* belt. Nevertheless, he was stately, and his long flowing sleeves made one overlook the stockings which hung loosely over his shoes. His sword, more like a simitar with red cord and tassels, he carried in his hand as he came in ; and in the hilt of his *jambiyah* sparkled a crescent of precious stones.

Walking ahead of us into the room, the soldiers that accompanied him remaining outside, he sat on a chair and motioned me and my companion to the low diwan before him. But he drew his chair so near that I felt most uncomfortable seated cross-legged almost between his

knees, especially that I had to be constantly screwing up my neck during the conversation. I brought two *masnads* together, therefore, and sat upon them. His Eminence smiled his approval, and he asked, in opening the conversation, if all our needs were being attended to.

‘Everything, praise be to Allah, is satisfactory,’ I said, ‘but we are getting more than we need of rest.’

The lines in his face softened as he smiled again, and said : ‘A long journey, a long rest. But come now with earnest words (*kalam mazbout*).’

‘The most earnest words are those which my love for Arabia and the Arabs dictate. I am not a foreigner, ya Mowlai, I am of you ; and if you doubt me or suspect my purpose, order me to stop and send me back whence I came.’

He referred to ‘a pile of affairs’ which prevented him from seeing us sooner, and asked me to proceed.

‘Before I begin, I would assure Your Eminence that I have nothing to do with the English ; I am not connected politically or commercially with any interests in America ; nor am I the official representative of King Husein. I am a self-appointed missionary of civilization, and Constantine is here with me, not as a captain in the Hijaz Army, but as a friend, a *rafiq*.’ I then repeated what I had already said at the first interview about the threefold purpose of my travels in Arabia. ‘If Mowlai approves, and facilitates the way to a realization, he will be serving his own interests, I think, and the interests of Arabia. My loyalty to the Arab cause has never been questioned, and I now hope that Mowlai, the discerning and prescient, will see no cause for doubt.’

‘*Inshallh*, there is no doubt.’ After excusing himself again for the delay, he continued : ‘Now, give me the best line in the poem (*bait’ul-qasid*), or the gist of the matter.’

‘There are two “best lines.” The first is an understanding with the English ; the second, a treaty with



King Husein. Your country should be opened, ya Mowlai, to commerce and to travel. Without a contact, along modern lines, with the outside world, Al-Yaman cannot progress ; and a treaty with Great Britain, a treaty of friendship and commerce, if it does not prejudice your sovereignty and the independence of your country, would, no doubt, be of great benefit to your people. But you will get better terms from the English, I think, when they know that you and King Husein are united in a common cause. I shall avoid generalizations. A Yaman-Hijaz alliance will help to solve, to your own satisfaction, the Hudaidah problem. Yes, I believe that Hudaidah, which is the natural and historical port of San'a, will be restored to you, if you substitute diplomacy for the sword. Continue your negotiations with the British, therefore, and conclude a treaty of alliance with the Hijaz. For if you open your country to the outside world, which is essential to its development and progress, you must be strong enough to maintain the integrity and independence of your rule, as well as peace and security in the land. But in this isolation, if it continues, is the disintegration ultimately of your power. Indeed, you are dissipating the strength of your nation and all its resources in wars, and, in what is worse than war, the preparation for it. You have a nation in arms, ya Mowlai, but that is not enough. Your people need protection from the cold, and from ignorance, and from poverty ; they need clothes, they need schools, they need modern means of transportation and trade ; and these will come only through peace and the broadening of the human mind. I do not want to see any wars between the East and the West ; it is a part of my life-task, in fact, to endeavour to bring about better relations, based upon sympathy and understanding, between Europe and Arabia, at least. Of course, I want to see Arabia mistress in her own house, which is only possible if the rulers and chiefs stop fighting against each other and unite in a common cause—the

cause of national integrity and international peace and good will. In the solution of all your political problems you have hitherto applied almost exclusively the sword. Try peace once—give peace a chance.'

The Imam nodded once or twice as I spoke. Otherwise his deep black eyes and his mobile mouth were held in a fixed expression—an expression of interest mingled with amazement.

'These are earnest words,' he said, leaning backward and looking at the rug on the wall. A pause, and he continued: 'The words of a wise man. But the Idrisi, he takes money from the Ingliz and makes war against us. He is also between us and Al-Hijaz. He is the separating factor—his position prevents a union.'

'He will join the union when it takes place. He cannot stand between two powerful neighbours and be hostile to them.'

'But the Ingliz are his friends, and they will help him.'

'The Ingliz, ya Mowlai, will not support a weak state in a similar position. They will modify their policy in Asir; they will even try, I believe, to come to an understanding with you all. But what harm can there be in an alliance between Al-Yaman and Asir? And in a treaty of friendship and commerce between them and Great Britain? Hudaidah will then be restored to you, and the Idrisi will be compensated with a slice of territory in the interior, in the mountains east or north. He has enough ports already, and he needs some productive land to give them life. When the alliance is concluded, the disputed boundaries can be peacefully adjusted.'

'*Nahi* (very good). We are not hostile to the Ingliz, in spite of their policy, and we have instructed Al'Arashy, our Representative at Aden, to negotiate with them. But up to the present time the negotiations have not borne fruits. They show us the fighting side of the shield, we show them the side of peace.'

'They will show the side of peace, too, when they

know that Al-Yaman and Al-Hijaz are united in an alliance.'

'And they will give back Hudaidah,' put in Constantine, who was itching to say something. 'If they refuse, we will strike at the Idrisi from the north, you, from the south, and we will wrest it from him—and force him after that to join the alliance.' He did not stop there, in spite of my gesture and my having previously warned him. But he launched into his favourite subject—arms, ammunition and aeroplanes, which was against my principle, contrary, in fact, to our understanding. For he came with me, not as a member of a delegation—there was no delegation—but as a travelling companion. I had to tell him so afterward, and I was sorry. But I did not go to Arabia to arouse it against Europe. Nor did I come from America to humour Fanaticism in arms or to support Ignorance in arms. On the contrary, we should make Ignorance and Fanaticism realize that they cannot live by arms alone. They need at least food and clothes and very often a doctor. Arabia, free and independent, yes. But we want to see schools and printing presses and hospitals in the country. And sanitation in the cities, and cleanliness in the homes. I think I lost my temper with Constantine. But I was afraid he had exploded a mine under my palace of peace.

The Imam, on the other hand, is a man of wisdom and moderation. He thinks for himself, and he meditates and prays. He also takes counsel with one or two of his men. But he has had, I think, enough of war. He is even averse to it. For although he is nursing a great political ambition, he is sufficiently practical to realise that, of all the allies of a conqueror, Circumstance is often the most faithful. He, therefore, abides his time, keeping the maps of Al-Yaman, of Arabia, before him. And there is Aden, the pearl in the crown of his ancestors. It is not only on the map, but also in his dream. He knows of the obstacles that stand between it and himself, although he

doubts the stories about its impregnability. But I do not think he realizes the extent of the interests, commercial and financial, which the East and the West have in Aden to-day. I asked one of the Saiyeds of his Diwan : ' How will you treat the many foreigners that are in Aden when you take possession of it ? ' ' We will make them pay tribute like the Jews,' was the reply. Fortunately for Al-Yaman that the Imam is not of that cast of mind.

For three days, however, I remained in doubt about the effect of my companion's speech upon him. Even the anguish of our days of captivity recurred. For although we were allowed to go to the city—to go anywhere, accompanied by soldiers, for a walk—he even once sent us horses—yet, for three long days, we were without word from the Noble Seat. More than once, Allah forgive me, I accused Constantine. Even more exasperating than his speech were the rhymes which he was constantly composing in praise of the Imam, and the sword of the Imam, and the umbrella of the Imam, etc.

They were dark and feverish days indeed, those first ten days in San'a ; and only when one of the secretaries of His Eminence came to see us one evening, carrying the conclusive word, did we feel that the clouds had lifted. A soldier preceded the honourable Saiyed, who came in salaaming familiarly, and sitting between us on the diwan, he started to praise San'a, whose beauty ' is more brilliant,' said he, ' than Cairo, and more majestic than Constantinople.' He then moved to Stamboul, and we learned by inference that he was one of the Representatives of Al-Yaman in the Parliament of the Young Turks ; thence to Cairo, where he lived for a time, a captive of the rounds of politics and pleasures ; and then to the Isle of Rhodes, where he was a captive in the original sense of the word, a political prisoner. All this information he conveyed to us in the inductive method ; a manner of projecting his personality as an introduction to the two travellers. He then removed his turban and took out

from one of its folds a letter which he presented to me. It was a message from the Noble Seat, an autographic Imamic writ, informing us that Saiyed Ahmad ibn Yahya'l-Kibsy was the Delegate of the Imam to us and his authorized representative in the treaty negotiations. Written in purple ink, in the Imamic manner, that is, a few lines in the centre of the sheet, under the large seal (which is red in times of war, black in times of peace), and the rest in half-circles around the margin, it read as follows :

In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the  
Compassionate

Follows the Red Seal, in which is written in a  
tangle of flourishes

YAHYA IBN HAMID'UD-DIN  
PRINCE OF THE FAITHFUL  
THE DEPENDENT ON ALLAH

The brother Ahmad ibn Yahya'l-Kibsy, be he  
guarded of Allah.

All the negotiations between us and Sherif Naser and subsequently with Saiyed Muhammed 'Alawi's-Saqqaf,<sup>1</sup> are known to you. Now, the Ustaz Ameen Rihani and his companion Constantine have arrived, and with them is a letter from the King of Al-Hijaz. It appears from the words of the Ustaz that the desire is to conclude the negotiations to the end in view. To aid us in the matter, you are, therefore, to confer with them to arrive at an agreement which shall cover the question from all its points of view and in all its details, internal and external. No one must know anything about the discussions, which all of you should keep secret. Present this to them. We have instructed the guards at the door to permit you to visit them. Peace upon you.

On the 26th of Shi'ban, 1340 (*Apr. 26th, 1922*).

<sup>1</sup> They were officially commissioned to negotiate the treaty between Al-Yaman and Al-Hijaz, but they did not succeed.



THE GATE OF THE CITY.



A CASTLE BY THE WAYSIDE, LOWER YAMAN.

To face page 144.



This dissipated every doubt that we were prisoners. We continued, in a manner, to be so, even during the negotiations, for the guards at the door did not admit any visitor without permission from the Imam.

Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy, who was the first to be thus favoured, is one of the most enlightened and tolerant of his class. He is also, as you will have inferred from his introductory words, a political reformer, with a penchant for intrigue, and with a cosmopolitan manner to boot. But he would not wholly and immediately destroy the Chinese wall of his country. He would open loopholes in it, that his people might see the world and breathe the air of Civilization, without exposing themselves to the draughts and the strong winds and the insidious currents thereof. This is the principal tenet of his political creed. But any tenet, political or religious, is in the eye of Saiyed Ahmad, Zaidi that he is, open to interpretation and subject to the law that governs the elastic breath of the universe. He is a creature of the political weather, with a keen eye for any change to foster a conspiracy, and two keen eyes for anything to promote the interests of the Imam and his own. Other things he sees not or desires not to see.

But the personality of Sheikh Ahmad is more inclusive. Ample of jowl and more ample of girth, heavy of step and light of heart, with an animating sparkle in his eye and an insinuating gesture in his speech, he seldom can offend, no matter how neglectful he may be and how avid of the things that contribute to his own personal comfort. He came to us in the end of the month of Shi'ban and the negotiations took place in Ramadhan. So we had to reverse for his sake our own course of existence, but we could not compete with him in sleep or shine beside him in the dilatory manner.

'Figure, ya Ameen. This is the time for the sunset meal, and then the time for *ghat*, and then the time for the morning meal, and then the time for sleep, and then



the hours of prayer—*zahir'u'mashi* (do you understand) ? Now, what time is there left for negotiations ? But I shall come to-morrow night, *inshallah*, after the hour of *ghat*.'

Which meant after midnight, when he *did* come, or between the two cannons (in the early dawn). But what difference to him, if neither the sun nor the moon lighted his path from his house across the square to our own ? Preceded and followed by soldiers carrying lanterns, he walked with a portly pace like the Image of Perfection himself, and he was announced to us, when he arrived at the outer gate, not by the escort, but by his cough and his heavy perfumes. Saiyed Ahmad is 'a walking garden of roses,' said Constantine in one of his rhymes ; 'he is a broken bottle of ottar of roses,' I corrected.

Poor, dear Saiyed Ahmad. What do you think he would first ask for when he arrived ? 'Ya, Ameen, a tablet of aspirin.' It was not a fancy for rhyming. He always did have 'a slaying headache,' and with a 'deposit' of *ghat* still in his mouth, he would take the medicine and wait until it had its effect. Whereupon, he would read one clause of the treaty, and if he overstrained himself, he would read two. The discussion would follow, but it often happened that when we were at the point of agreement concerning a certain matter or a certain phrasing, the drums would beat their prelude to the cannon for the morning meal, and Saiyed Ahmad would rise in haste. 'Salaam, ya Ameen. Salaam, ya Constantine. To-morrow I shall come earlier, *inshallah*.'

But neither earlier nor later for two or three days, perhaps for a week, if Constantine did not continually coax and wheedle him with rhymes. I, too, once tried to change, with a line of verse, the slow and sleepy tenor of his way ; but I think I made things worse, because I did not emulate the 'jollyng' manner of my companion.

I was seduced by a rhyme—‘ Quibsy ’ in Arabic is intriguing. For even as in English the versifier is certain to choose ‘ tipsy ’ for the first rhyme (but is there a choice ?), he must, in Arabic, yield to the temptation of *lubsī*—a humbug.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FASTING AND FEASTING

SAYS one of the Commentators of the Koran : <sup>1</sup> ' Blessed are those who can distinguish between the black thread and the white thread at the break of dawn, for their fast shall be perfect and their reward in *al-jannat*, without stint.' But in every Muslem country to-day there is a drum or a cannon or a tin pan or a public crier to announce that ghostly moment—the first minute of the first hour of the day—and bring to every pious one the eternal blessing of a perfect fast.

In San'a, the cannon is preceded by a flourish of the drum—a mystic flourish withal, for it begins in a slow tempo, develops into an ecstasy, and ends in a gradually subsiding, a vanishing measure, thus suggesting an accompaniment to a dervish dance. It is the first call to breakfast, two hours after midnight ; the second call, about ten minutes later, is boomed out of a cannon's mouth ; and from that time till the moment when the human sight can distinguish between the black and the white threads of dawn, the Faithful may eat and gorge themselves. Three hours, in other words, for breakfasting, or what is called *suhour* (dawn meal), and then, the cannon of the *imsak* (withholding from food), or the beginning of the fast.

After the *imsak*-cannon, people pray and go to sleep ; about noon one begins to see here and there a moving

<sup>1</sup> ' And eat and drink, until ye can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the day-break.' The Koran, Chapter II., p. 22 (Sale's Translation).

shadow, and not until four o'clock is the city open for business. But ten minutes before sunset the drums beat again and people straightway close their shops and hasten home. Patiently, nervously, grumpily, they wait for this hour, the hour of the sunset-cannon, which is called the cannon of the *iftar* (breaking the fast). But it is not breakfast, nor is it dinner or supper. It is the second meal of a day in Ramadhan, the daily feast, rather, which is begun at that time, and after an interruption—an interregnum—of a few hours at night, is continued during the hours of morning, between the two cannons, as the natives say, that is the cannon of the *suhour*, which invites you to eat and that of the *imsak*, which orders you to stop.

With the people of Al-Yaman there is also the hour of *ghat*, which follows, in Ramadhan, the first half of the feast, and after the *ghat*, about ten o'clock in the evening, the shops are open again for business. Indeed, midnight usurps the functions of midday, and for three or four hours, even in the flicker and smell of petroleum and tallow, San'a achieves something of glamour. The shadows move languidly or squat idly in mirky pools, as it were, of light, and the vistas reveal what is more like a bad film than an actual and somnolently active bazar. The only reality, it seems to me, is that which is ushered by the flourish of the drums—the prelude of the first call to the first daily meal, or the second half of the daily feast. The people then evince some life—their movement is less spectral, a substance and vigour come back to face and voice—they become pleasantly familiar. But neither the jubilations of Cairo, for instance, nor the festivities of Jeddah seem to be to their humour. Quietly, privately, they eat, and they dissipate; quietly they pray; and even more so are they at their *ghat* parties, which are their nearest approach to a festivity of any kind. It is the Zaidi spirit, as austere in the sensuous as it is in the spiritual. But not so the Shafi'i, who is

open, genial, frankly—and vocally—festive. His is more like the Latin as compared with the Anglo-Saxon temperament.

In Jeddah, for instance, the nights of Ramadhan are reminiscent of carnival. The streets are lighted with Chinese lanterns and decorated with bunting ; voices are heard chanting passages from the Koran ; and, in addition to the cannons that announce the hours of the feast and the fast, there are criers and tin-pan men who go around repeating rhymes of joy and of warning, and often maliciously disturbing the merry-makers within. 'The white thread of day, ye who would pray ! Gone the black thread, put away your bread !' Besides, the Government issues a calendar giving the time of sunset and dawn to a second ; the reminders for a perfect fast—the aids to the fulfilment of the Commentator's promise—are many ; and the devout are prompt in responding to every call. Soon after the sunset cannon is fired, the hours of feasting begin, and of visiting, and of gossip, and of clandestine joys. Aye, even the women share in this Arab saturnalia, for while the men are feasting, the harim that hungers for the bread of the heart may have it through a secret door, or it may come down, like Santa Claus, from the roof. Most convenient for assignations are the walled roofs of Jeddah.

The men feast till two or three o'clock in the morning ; every citizen of standing has a dinner-party, and those that have not are with those that have. Some of the epicurean hosts put their servants on guard around their homes to keep the public criers and tin-pan men away ; and they continue their feasting and merry-making till the white thread of dawn is disentangled from the black. What do they do after that ? They go to bed and sleep till four in the afternoon, thus escaping—shirking—ten hours of the fast. They then spend an hour at the bath, another hour in a walk around the lagoon, and they return when the cannon of sunset is fired to begin the

festive night. Thus do they kill time in Ramadhan and kill Ramadhan in the bargain.

The *hammals* are the other side of the shield. They do not fast at all, because they have to work, and for the same reason they cannot participate in the night revels. Some of them, from spite, carry the tin pan and become public criers; they are the first to trouble the city's sleep or those that sleep in the city—the middle-class people, who are the Prophet's best friends. Among these are the poor, of course, who *have* to fast, sometimes for days in succession, in other cities, but in Jeddah very few of them are deprived at the festive hour. For the rich, be it said to their credit, have always two parties, one inside and another outside—the one for their friends, the other for the poor.

No, not without a real compensation is Ramadhan. For another good custom, nay, a duty, is the giving of alms—the *zakat*—a form of income tax, which the Prophet imposed upon all the Muslemin. Alms, for the sake of Allah. One gives according to one's means, either to the poor or to the Faith, through its ministers of grace. Most all the big commercial houses of Jeddah have almsgiving days, which are announced a week in advance, and on that day, the head of the firm or his representative sits before the door with a sack of silver—reals and rupees—before him, which he distributes to those that come. The *zakat* of one house alone, I was told, amounted one year to £5,000. Allah will, therefore, forgive the sybarites of Jeddah many things at their festivals, even the soft-cheeked boys who dance and sing for them.

Indeed, Jeddah has a right to decorate itself with Chinese lanterns and buntings, for her children are all too happy to do anything wrong. Even the bare-footed police have a holiday. The tradesmen have scarcely time to count their gains, for the pilgrims, on their way to Mecca, contribute to the profit and to the night gaiety of

the city. Allah and the Prophet be praised ! Nations and institutions come and go, but the Kaaba goes on for ever. Thus partly because Jeddah is in the vicinity of the Kaaba, is its month of fast so fecund in mundane joys.

San'a, on the other hand, is distant, and therefore not so fortunate. Its common people, moreover, do not enjoy the full benefit of the *zakat*, which, as we have seen, has been included in the revenues of the Imamdom. San'a, once the gayest city in all Arabia (not long ago was this, even when the Turks were paying dear for a slippery hope in Al-Yaman), is now, to all appearances, especially in Ramadhan, a city in sackcloth and ashes, submitting humbly and piously to the blue laws and the indigo blue army of the Imam.

I asked one of the Saiyeds if they had any professional chanters of the Koran, as in Cairo and in Jeddah, who make an honest penny, especially in the month of Ramadhan, by chanting at festivals. 'No,' he replied, 'every one chants in his own home and for himself. The *mujawwid* (chanter) who is likely to have a good voice will become proud and conceited. And that is bad. Conceit will corrupt the best of deeds. . . . Music and song, outside the army, are banned by the Imam.'

I asked the same Saiyed if they had good horses in Al-Yaman. 'Very many,' he replied. 'And do you have any races?' 'No ; that is not permitted. It is not right, when you have a good horse, to enter into a race with another. That is deception. Should the race be permitted and your horse wins, you will feel proud, you will become arrogant. And that is another vice.' I know not whether the Puritans have ever penetrated to these depths of gloom.

But we may feast, aye, we may feast. I am able to include myself and my companion in the gormandising 'We,' thanks to the Imam and to the first man that had

the courage to invite us to his house. He was one of those who met us outside the city on the day of our arrival, as well as of the privileged few, who, after the ban was lifted, were permitted to visit us. Sheikh Ali Yahya is a Yamani, a citizen of San'a, whose business in Port Sudan is to supply the Government there with labourers imported from his native country ; and there are many, it seems, who think that by going with Sheikh Ali they may become in a few years as rich as he. Or, they would escape the military service and the taxations of the Imam. Be that as it may.

Sheikh Ali one afternoon joyously informed us that he was going to ask the Imam for permission to take us to his home for dinner, for the *iftar*, rather, since it was in Ramadhan. Does he need a permission to do so ? Indeed, it is as significant, our being invited out, as any important affair of State. Nor are we supposed to accept without the Imamic nod. For when His Eminence has foreign visitors, especially when they are like ourselves enveloped in the mists of suspicion, it is understood that they are his own guests, and no one, without his permission, has a right so see them, or talk to them, or ask them to his home. Bear in mind that he has enemies even among the Saiyeds his cousins, and that San'a, like every capital in the world, is a political magnet as well as a motive power of political intrigue. In according Sheikh Ali Yahya the privilege, therefore—I am speaking from the Imamic point of view—he had him invite also our friend and colleague Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy. Thus were we kept under his vicarious protection. Safety first, even in the land of the Zioud.

When Sheikh Ali and his brother came for us a little before the cannon of sunset, Saiyed Ahmad and the military escort were ready ; and we walked across Shararah Square, preceded by one soldier and followed by three, as if we were being removed from one prison to another. But twenty minutes later we were in the heart



of the city, and we stopped, in the best residential section, before a house four stories high, built of basalt and granite blocks in alternate rows and crowned with a belvedere. Like all the big houses of San'a, of any big city in Al-Yaman, the main floor is used as a stable, the second floor is for the servants, the third floor for the harim, and the fourth for the men and the guests. After we had ascended a hundred very deep and very high stone steps, which Saiyed Ahmad, were it not in Ramadhan, would have cursed, we reached the belvedere, which is a sumptuously furnished hall occupying half of the roof and commanding three very attractive views of the city. Above the casement windows, which are of alabaster, were the usual decorative loopholes fitted with coloured glass. The floor and the low diwans are covered with rugs; the cushions are encased in a cherry-coloured cloth; and in the centre of the room is a brass tray more than a metre in diameter, on which stood six beautiful Indian *mada'ahs*, whose cocoanut boles are covered with a substantial layer of silver filigree.

Two other guests, a man of middle age and a boy of about twelve, whom Sheikh Ali had invited, also with the permission of the Imam, were there before us. The man, a ruling Sheikh in Mt. Benu Matar, which produces the best coffee in Al-Yaman, had come to see his son, who was held a hostage in San'a, and he brought him to the feast. Sheikh Ali introduced to us 'one of our cousins, Sheikh Mansour and his son Abd'ur-Rahman.'

When they rose to salaam, I noticed the unerring similarity in their clothes: the same red striped tunic, the same cut in the long broad sleeves, the same Indian sash, the same dagger, the same headdress; indeed, the miniature was as attractive as the original. But more animated. It was he, the boy, who first asked us the question: 'Do you like San'a?' And when the servant came with glasses of sweet lime juice it was he again who



NOTABLES IN A CAFE.



THE HABITATION OF THE PIOUS

To face page 154.



spoke. 'To clarify the saliva (*rawwigh ur-rih*) after the fast,' he said.

Another servant followed, carrying a large brass tray on which were blue saucers containing three apricots each. I waited before I touched mine for the word of my little Chesterfield. It came, to be sure, and every one applauded 'the key of the appetite.' His father smiled as he patted him on the back, and I had a lively doubt about the originality of his wit. He has courage, I said to myself, but is he not a parrot? The third servant came in with the coffee, and I was tempted to put his genius to the test. But before I spoke he said: 'To wake up the stomach.' 'The stomach,' I objected professorially, 'does not sleep.' 'To perfume it, then.' 'Perfume,' I maintained the professorial manner, 'is only used externally.' He did not turn to his father for help, nor did he seem embarrassed. 'Coffee,' after a little pause, 'coffee is more than a perfume. It is refreshing also and invigorating.'

It was the best coffee, made in the Turkish manner, I had tasted in Al-Yaman. The cigarettes that were served with it were Egyptian, very rare in San'a, and Constantine kept the box before him. But the last note in the prelude to the feast was the most esthetic and permeating; it announced itself before the servant came in, carrying on a tray a silver censer, which might have been taken out of the chancel of a cathedral. We all inhaled of the fumes of aromatic wood, holding the censer even under our beards. But Sheikh Mansour was even more fastidious; he covered it with his sleeve, thus perfuming his tunic. Abd'ur-Rahman his son did likewise, and then took me by surprise. I had anticipated the usual running comment, but he asked me a question instead. And I was stumped. It never occurred to me, even as a poet, to associate incense with anything mundane. There are things which we liken to incense, which are reminiscent of it, but is there nothing more representa-

tive, more familiar and fragrant than incense? An old wine? No poet, however, as far as I know, has ever reversed the simile, and I hardly expected a Muslem boy—a Zaidi, at that—to think of wine. He repeated the question: ‘Of what does incense remind us?’ And the answer, my lady of the drawing-room would characterise as shocking. But from a boy of his age it was amusing. ‘*Yuzakkir ut-tib bi-sha’r il-habib.*’ Which is, moreover, another illustration of the Arab’s fondness for the rhyme. *Tib*, in the phrase, is incense, *habib* is beloved; so we are reminded by the *tib* of the hair of the *habib*.

That was the last note in the prelude. Two servants, one with a basin and a towel, the other with an *aftaba*, were waiting at the end of the hall; we got up, therefore, and washed our hands. The thought that this was the first formality of the feast was balanced in my mind, even outweighed, by the other thought that it was the last strain in the last note of the prelude; and with it ended everything that was pleasant and charming and beautiful and esthetic. I knew what was coming, and I sat on a *masnad* at the head of the long low table, which was set at the end of the hall, that I may not disturb anyone when I wanted to withdraw. It is the custom in Arabia to rise when you are finished, without waiting for the other guests.

The boy Abd’ur-Rahman tucked his voluminous sleeves, like his father, and tied them in a knot behind his neck. So did the others, who crouched in a half-kneeling posture around the festal board. Sheikh Ali, who has lived for many years in Port Sudan, is partly Egyptian in his kitchen as well as in his Arabic dialect. There was a multitude of little plates, set in an oval close to each other, containing all sorts of indescribable dishes—messes, solid and liquid, in which I could recognize the remains of a tomato or an eggplant or a squash—and all cooked in a manner that would have delighted a Mexican. *Bisbas*

(chilli) flamed, as it were, in every dish. It flamed, of a truth, in the mouth. But in the centre of the table was a platter of unsliced rice and mutton, flanked by two big bowls of broth, on the surface of which floated white and yellow blotches of fat. The people of Al-Yaman love this broth, which they call 'the rain of the heart.' It is, of course, communal, but, in spite of Sheikh Ali's pretty little Chinese wooden spoons, I had ceased to be communistic.

For a while I enjoyed the performance before me. Little Abd'ur-Rahman thrust his paw heroically into the steaming rice, took a chunk of mutton and pulled it to pieces; and after two or three mouthfuls he would lift the bowl of broth to his mouth and linger at it with a sense of ineffable delight. Once his father rated him, I think, but the boy was incorrigible. Even Saiyed Ahmad, who is also a hero at the spread, more than once stopped to watch in wonderment the onslaughts of his little rival.

But I did not tell you about the native Yaman dish, the *hulbah*, which is a green sauce or a soft purée, of a herb-like spinage, to which are added rice and meat, and pulverized mint, and every spice on earth, principally red pepper. It is made, in fact, like a salad, before you, and every one contributes something to it from his own plate. At Sheikh Ali's it was served in a novel manner by three servants; one brought in a brazier of live coals, which was placed on the table; another a tripod, which was set in the brazier; and a third carried a metal vessel containing the *hulbah*, which he placed on the tripod. This was Sheikh Ali's chafing dish. Everyone threw something into it—a handful of rice, a chunk of fat, meat balls, potatoes, crumbs of bread, and more *bisbas*, red pepper. Saiyed Ahmad even poured over it what remained of the broth, and Sheikh Ali stirred the mess with a wooden ladle. The fumes had a pungent but agreeable odour, and our host

served it in plates. Nevertheless, I—I had seen what was thrown into it.

The other native dish, which comes with, or after, the *hulbah*, is the bread-bake—hot bread soaked in hot butter and honey—and it is so soggy that it can be kneaded in the hand like dough. I have learned to eat rice with my hands, even to pull to pieces the ribs of a lamb. But to dip into the *hulbah*, and then into the butter and honey, and then into the broth for a piece of fat—this is barbarous. I was so glad that the Imam furnished us with knives and forks and spoons ; also with a cook who was not born with *bisbas* in his mouth. . . . What did I eat at Sheikh Ali's banquet? The bread was good ; the water of San'a is always good ; and the *laban*, which they still call by its Turkish name, *yoghourt*, and which is made in individual bowls, was excellent. Besides, there was a honey-cake, like a doughnut, which escaped the *hulbah* melting-pot.

After the feast, Saiyed Ahmad gave his paunch its freedom by taking off his belt and placing it on a chair ; he then took off his stockings and went out to make his ablutions prior to the evening prayer. Sheikh Ali and a few others joined him ; and while they were away the soldiers and the servants cracked jokes about the belt. 'It is big enough for a mule,' said one. 'Without it,' said another, as he held it around his waist, 'his stomach will fall to the ground—like this.' He took up a cushion, placed it against his own stomach, tightened the belt, and then loosened it. The cushion fell to the ground, and the laughter was unseemly.

The *mada'ahs* were all filled and lighted, more aromatic wood was placed in the censer, which stood on a tabouret in the centre of the room, and Sheikh Ali, who is a dandy and always reeks of perfume, took out of his pocket a silver-cased vial and went around shaking out drops of it on the hands of his guests. Ottar of roses. It was most refreshing after such a meal.

But now comes the crowning of calamity, the hour of *ghat*. The servants closed all the windows and then they brought in about a dozen big bundles of the precious leaf, which were placed before our host for distribution. Every bundle contains a dozen or more small bundles, each of which is wrapped in green foliage and tied with bark. They were thrown around, as usual, not only to the guests, but also to the servants and the soldiers that were sitting at the other end of the room. There are no social distinctions at the *ghat-majlis*, where Democracy in its purest form presides, where master and servant sit together for an hour of *keif*.

An hour of *keif*? To a Yamani, yes. But to a foreigner the room, after half an hour, becomes like a *hasheesh* den, even worse. For what with the smoke of the *mada'ahs* and the fumes of the censer, and what with the evaporations, the human breath hanging in an amber atmosphere, and what with the distillations and the smells, the room becomes asphyxiating. But to the Yamani, who finds the vapours even more intoxicating than the emerald leaf, it is the vestibule of Paradise. I nourished for more than two hours the illusion ; I ate the *ghat*, four bundles in succession ; I smoked the *mada'ahs*, one after another ; I drank a dozen cups of coffee and a dozen glasses of tea ; I kept the censer close to me and asked Sheikh Ali more than once for his silver-cased vial of ottar of roses ; but finally, the vestibule began to rock like a ship in a storm. A good omen. We were moving—we were sailing. Aye, and I tried to get a peep through a loophole to see whether we were within sight of land—of lubberland, of Paradise.

No ; it was hell—hell within the vestibule and hell within one at least of its inmates. Although my head reeled, I was still conscious and not without resolution, but it was more than an hour after midnight when I at last retook possession of myself and got up to leave. They would have me stay till the second half of the



feast, till 'the white thread' of dawn, but I insisted on going, and Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy, who had to pay a visit every night to one of his wives, supported my resolution.

The night air was refreshing, reviving. Hark! The flourish of the drums, which at that hour, to those who would not sleep, is agreeably exciting. People were closing their shops and briskly moving about. Shararah Square was empty, however, except for a few soldiers on duty, and ere we had reached our home, the cannon of the *suhour* was fired. The hour of the second half of the feast, which Saiyed Ahmad will have at home, with one of his wives. But we? To bed with the demon *ghat*—to bed with an hundred pains and pangs.

Nor could we sleep—I am speaking for myself and comrade Constantine. Insomnia, a tingling of the skin, palpitation of the heart, dullness and debility, to say nothing of the breakdown of the spirit, utter disgust and a consciousness of the inane—these were the fruits of our *ghat* dissipation. Moreover, when I did fall asleep, I was harrowed by a nightmare in which a green monster was tearing my breast with its claws, and blue devils were pulling me by the feet into a blazing fire. Hunchback Ahmad, who heard me scream, thought that I was being murdered by my companion. But when he saw us facing each other in stupefaction, he exclaimed: 'Praised be Allah!' and he advised me not to sleep again till the morning. The blue devils only come at night in Ramadhan. 'Come, ya Ameen, and eat some *ghat* with us.'

I could not sleep even in the daytime the following day, and for three days after I was in the suds. I got what is called the Ramadhan temper; yea, I had a grudge against the whole Yaman, against the Imam and the Imamdom, and I took it out of comrade Constantine. But mine was civet compared with that of our poor Sheikh Saleh, who was not permitted by the Imam to go

back to his home before we left San'a. He first took it out of himself: he did horrible things to his own body. On the day before the first of Ramadhan he went to a *hajjam* (one who practises phlebotomy) and got himself slashed in a dozen places. I never suspected him of having a surplus of blood. But blood letting is still a common remedy for all ills in Arabia. With Sheikh Saleh it was a precaution which did not, however, serve a good purpose. He called Madani a pig, and Madani called him an ass. Which was very bad all around. The Sheikh cuffed our servant and threw our baggage out of his room.

He then rubbed himself with clarified butter—used four pounds on his body—and he got into his sleeping bag, which he tied, not around his neck, but above his head, while still abusing and cursing Madani. 'Ass, son of an ass! He knows not when his masters are going away. Pig, son of a pig!' And Madani told us that he, Sheikh Saleh, used snuff in the daytime. Does snuff break the fast, and is it lawful? The boy was contemplating revenge. But the question was discussed among our household, and the gardener Bashir delivered the decision: 'Anything that prevents madness is lawful.' If that is not in the Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet) it ought to be there.

But mighty few are the things that prevent madness in San'a, especially in the month of Ramadhan. On the other hand, madness, technically, is not known, and that is a blessing. But is it not wonderful that people without public entertainments of any sort—without music, dancing or song, without pictures, without games, without cafés—do not all of a night go mad? It would seem cruel to deprive them of their *ghat*; and there is neither good sense nor justice in trying to impose upon them our own moral code, corrupt as it is, in relation to women.

The Saiyeds of Al-Yaman and Asir, the well-to-do and

the poor, they all take unto themselves more than one wife, and those that can afford it, particularly the Saiyeds—whether they can or not—add concubines to the legal four. But more on this head when we come to Asir.

I would now, before closing this chapter, take you for a stroll in San'a in a night of Ramadhan. Hezam, one of the military guard, a dusky Adonis with a dull mind, insists on being our guide. He is jealous of hunchback Ahmad, whose goodness and intelligence made him a favourite, and now he would rival him in service. The disposition is there, but the spirit, alas, is different. Hezam would first propitiate himself by clearing the way for us with the butt end of his rifle. He would even go out of his own way—we are supposed to follow—to seek a knot of people for his butt. Nothing, at a short distance, however, seemed sufficiently palpable for a collision, and when the impediment was reached, it broke, as we passed through it, even by it, like wraiths of smoke. Wraiths, indeed, in voluminous robes and heavy turbans, passed slowly through the narrow streets, which the Ramadhan moon was doing her best to illuminate. The Standard Oil Company was more successful in lighting up the shops.

Hence, there was more visiting than buying and selling. Even the children, who do not have to fast nor go to the mosque for a lesson in the Koran, availed themselves of the opportunity to play also at night. Nevertheless, the gaiety of night life, which in Jeddah is at its height, is in San'a at its ebb. There is one thing, however, which is common to both, common to most Muslem cities in Ramadhan. In these half-lighted narrow streets, these dark lanes, these gloomy paths, no robberies, no crimes ever occur, and seldom a quarrel. This is not to be attributed wholly to the virtue of a Koranic law which demands a hand for a theft and tolerates, nay, imposes the whip as an instrument of correction. No ; it is more



THE CITY IN THE HILLS.



"A BIG MAN ON A LITTLE STEED."

To face page 162.



the result of self-discipline, which, in this month of fast, in spite of all its dissipations, is always evident at least in public.

But here is our little Chesterfield, the boy Abd'ur-Rahman, in a tunic with flowing sleeves, a pair of red and yellow ornamented sandals, a turban somewhat heavy for his size, and a stick which is more like a staff; the little Sheikh is out for a walk—alone. He salaamed and offered his hand. 'Are you not afraid,' I asked, 'in going out alone?' 'Of what should we be afraid?' he snapped. 'San'a is safe, more safe than a mosque. It has a wall—very high—and the wall has seven gates—all locked at night—and at every gate there are thirty of the soldiers of the Imam. No wild beasts can enter into San'a. You wish to make a tour of the Souq? We have come out with the same desire.' After a pause: 'Will you honour us with permission to accompany you?'

Abd'ur-Rahman, like all Arab boys, seldom refers to himself as a single, solitary being, but always uses the Papal 'we.' He deserves it, however, if only for the fact that he is the best guide I have met in Al-Yaman. He knows all the bazars, he knows most of the shopkeepers, he does not ask stupid questions, and, what is very rare in a guide, he does not romance. 'How many *hammams* are there in San'a?' I asked. '*Khairat*,' stupid Hezam replied. Now, *khairat* (bounties) is one of those words in every language which are treated like donkeys and made to carry loads of meaning. 'Many,' 'a lot,' 'a great deal,' 'a multitude,' 'numerous,' 'infinite,' besides 'wealth' and 'bounty' does *khairat* in Al-Yaman carry upon its back. Aye, the Yamani speaks of a 'wealth' of flies, for instance, as well as a 'bounty' of *hammams*—*khairat*. But Abd'ur-Rahman said: 'There are only about twelve.' Hezam repeated, '*Khairat*,' and our honest and well informed guide counted them on his fingers, giving the name and place of each one. 'Just

twelve—no more.' He might have added, 'We know.' But he is modest, in spite of the Papal 'we,' and unlike Hezam, when we meet with a crowd, he requests them to make way for us. He even prevented him from using the butt of his rifle at the people gathered in front of a large gate in one of the city squares.

The gate leads into an arcade, and the arcade into a vast court, with stalls and alcoves under arches all around, where scribes are writing in books and men of grave aspect are smoking *mada'ahs*. In the court and under the arches are piles of bales and boxes, and at one end are large scales with cannon-balls of various sizes as weights. 'This is the Custom House of San'a,' says Abd'ur-Rahman. 'Every loaded camel or donkey or mule or man entering through one of the seven gates of the city has to come here first to be weighed and cleared.' 'The merchandise, you mean,' said I, in a teasing conceit. But he was not disturbed. 'The *qorash* (pack beasts),' he explained, 'are also taxed. A cameleer has to pay duty on his merchandise and entrance tax on each of his camels.'

Evidently this boy-hostage, whose father, by offering satisfactory bond, secured him his freedom in the city, was not waiting to be taught by anyone. From the Custom House he took us across the square and into a labyrinth of dark lanes, which were lighted by the moon in places, in others, by the faint rays of kerosene or candle, filtering through the coloured glass from above; a few people stalked abroad like phantoms on a stage; a man in a white garment, stepping slowly, gravely, out of a doorway, seemed as realistic as any ghost in Hamlet; and, in a progression of terror, a bundled-up thing, amorphous and weird, looking like some prehistoric animal, issued briskly out of an opening in the wall, as it were, and, hurrying past us, appropriately vanished. 'He is going to buy *ghat*,' said Abd'ur-Rahman.

Soon we find ourselves traversing a winding path about

a yard wide and issuing out of a rift of unmitigated darkness into a clearing flooded with moonlight. The contrast fills both eye and mind with delight, with wonder. Here is a scene that has much in it of sublime beauty. At the end of the clearing are the huge white dome and the tapering minaret of a mosque ; behind and around the mosque are rows of houses limned against the sky in squares of different heights and varied spacings, whose shadows, like a cubist etching, are spread before us. But nothing in cubism, in painting or on the stage, can surpass this scene in the picturesque, at least, and the dramatic. In its detail, moreover, it has an esoteric appeal. Around the mosque are the houses of men of wealth, whose occupants, at this hour in Ramadhan, are either entertaining their guests or reading the Koran ; and the lights within, reflected through the alabaster and the coloured glass of the windows, whether in the belvederes or on the floors below, suggest the subdued and haunting brilliance that reveals itself through the stained glass of a cathedral. It has in it, moreover, the pale amber of antiquity.

But here is antiquity itself, preternaturally animate, in the Souq. One may forget the Grand Boulevard, the Strand or the White Way ; but never these caves, once seen, lighted by a candle or an oil lamp, in which weird, rusty figures are squatting, or peeping through half-open doors, or busy at their crafts, while smoking the *mada'ahs*, or just counting their beads and repeating the attributes of Allah. Here is the past that seems eternal—the past that lives eternally, distilled or crystallised, in the races of man—here in San'a, I find a living exteriorisation of it.

The figures were etched in my mind, the scenes were burned into my memory. Here is one of them—a skeleton with a long white beard and a clean upper lip ; with sunken eyes glimmering beneath a huge turban ; with nothing but a rag around his loins and an expansive



*mada'ah* at his side—and he is busy hammering little tin sheets into boxes for snuff, for powdered musk, or for aromatic paste. This old man, who might have come out of a legendary past, when people lived 1,000 years, is still working, at his age and in his condition, to gratify the fancy of the youth of San'a.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE HANDICRAFTS OF SAN'A

A FEW of the big merchants of Aden have collections of Yaman antiquities of the Himyar period—exquisite pieces of jewellery, curious objects in alabaster, marble statuettes, steel weapons, etc.—which justify the glowing pages of Al-Hamdani. There was, indeed, an ancient Yaman art which was absolutely indigenous, and what remains of it to-day, in forms, not, perhaps, so exquisite and certainly not so representative of life, is confined to what is sanctioned by the religion that conquered this part of Arabia more than 1,200 years ago. But the material that served the Himyar artist has not been exhausted ; on the contrary, much of it is still buried in the mountains which Yaqout so accurately describes.

Not only the material for creative art, but the sources as well of a varied industry, for besides the agate of Mt. Shibam, the alabaster of Mt. 'Ishar, the silver of Mt. Ridhradh, which is called to-day Mt. Aanes, the quartz of Mt. Si'wan, there are iron and copper mines in various parts of Al-Yaman. Mica, it seems, abounds. I have heard people in Mawia and in San'a speak of a substance which can be cut into thin transparent plates, like glass, and which is impervious to heat. But Yaqout tells us of the *talq* (mica), which in the past was one of the industrial products of Al-Yaman, and the word of the historian is confirmed by the poet, who puts into a rhyme the fact that the mica factory of Sillan was destroyed by the Abyssinians.

Four things, we are further told, which come out of Al-Yaman, have filled the markets of the world, and these

are gum, musk, saffron and rock salt. 'The white camels of Oman returned from Al-Yaman yellow from their loads of saffron.' One of the four primaries, which they use to-day to paint their glass windows and dye their cotton fabrics, is still extracted from this plant. The other three, red and green and blue, are also vegetable dyes, but the demand exceeds the supply, so they have to use chemical dyes as well.

This takes us out of the book-knowledge with which I would not further bore you. For instead of reading ancient history, we shall take a walk through it—we shall continue, in the daytime, our night tour of the bazars. Saiyed Ahmad ul-Qibsy himself, by order of the Imam, shall be this time our guide. But Saiyed Ahmad, you will remember, is a Sybarite, and Sybarites, you will permit me to remind you, only moved in sedans, and sedans, alas! do not exist in San'a. Our illustrious friend has a mule and many servants to trot before and behind it, but for our present purpose, at least, we cannot thus carried and escorted go through the bazar. What is to be done? There is a carriage in the Capital—an only one-horse cab of fame, which was bought as a junk in Djebuti and carried in instalments over the hump of a camel from Aden—and that is ordered for us. Nor shall we move, even thus riding, without an escort, for two soldiers amble before us and two behind us, besides Hezam, who proudly occupies the second seat on the box.

We rock and reel and rattle through Shararah Square, and out of the gate at the south-east end of it to the open road, which winds around the city wall in an easterly direction to the Aden Gate; the two large barracks, outside the city wall, to the right and the left as we enter, were built by the Turks, factory-fashion, without distinction. The gate is elaborate in carving and design, but lacks proportion. The first time we entered San'a was through the north gate, and now we enter it through the south. It is about three in the afternoon, and Saiyed

Ahmad is not in the best of moods. He should be sleeping by this time, or reading the Life of the Prophet, or lounging on warm marble in the *hammam*. Besides, the Djebuti junk is not likely to hold out with us to the end ; the horse, moreover, is testy and the driver has the Ramadhan temper. We had not gone far, in fact, when something under us cracked, and the horse was on his fore knees. Were it not in Ramadhan, the driver would have invoked upon him and his generation, back to the days of Thamud, the curses of Allah. But not a word was said. We all alighted, and after a brief debate we decided to go in one direction and then meet Saiyed Ahmad later in one of the shops of the Jambiyah Bazar, which was quite near.

The escort was divided among us, and Hezam, the dusky Adonis, to whom he delegated the duties of guide, walked ahead, with the butt end of his rifle, as usual, before him. It was kept busy, to be sure, for he could not at times use his tongue instead. Bully not, and abuse not, in Ramadhan. But the men as well as the children that stood in our way got a taste, nevertheless, of the Imam's military rule. Once I had to stand reproachfully between him and a decrepit old man, who was walking within the forbidden space. But the way he treated the donkeys and the camels was even more outrageous. 'You will break your *bunduq*,' said one of the soldiers. 'This is a Mauser,' he replied, 'and very strong.'

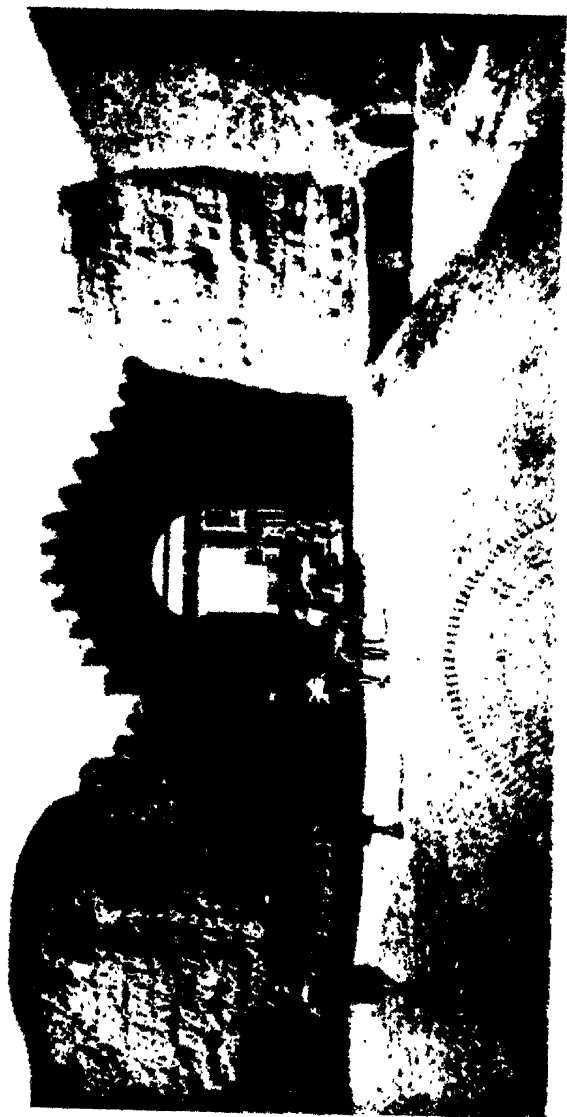
It was at Ibb when I first observed the cruel and overbearing manner of the military Junker of Al-Yaman. The 'Amel was taking us to one of his gardens, and as the children gathered around us he asked them to go away. Whereupon one of the soldiers of the escort took up the charge and chased them away with stones, crying Brr ! Brr ! at them, without the slightest suggestion of humour, as if they were a flock of goats. The 'Amel, the kindest of men, did not order him to stop.

There was little or no resentment of the action of Hezam

—the soldier of the Imam. The Yamani's broad 'a' when he speaks of the Imam or swears by the 'head of the Imam!' would make an Englishman gasp. I made no attempt, when he did swear, to further reprove him. But soon a gust of wind blew the sand and dust of the street into clouds before us, and Hezam was the first to turn back and cover his face with the loose end of his turban. 'Give it the *bunduq*,' I said with a repressed glee, and the poor disconcerted one blubbered out that it was all for my honour and comfort. He meant, of course, his own violence in clearing the street.

We had reached the mosque, in the shadow of which the lapidaries give shape and lustre to the precious stones of Al-Yaman. Here in a row of low little shops they work, and the first thing that attracts the attention is the action of dipping a stick into the water and rubbing it against a stone. I approached one of these lapidaries, and he offered me a bunch of sticks to examine. Each one, not longer than a lead pencil, had at its end, set in a mixture of gum and pitch, a red quartz. The manner of turning out a stone for a ring or a seal is as follows: The trip hammer is first used to break up the original into small pieces, which are set in the adhesive substance at the end of a stick; and then the process of formation and polishing is achieved upon four different stones—the first, a flint, eats away the angles of a gem; the second, less abrasive, rounds it; the third, a sandstone, cleans it; the fourth, a chalk, I think, gives it the polish; and behold, a carnelian, with which to charm away the evil spirits.

The variety, in quality and form and colour, would bewilder a purchaser, were he buying at a jeweller's in Paris or London. But here they are sold in lots, and by the man that is grinding at the stone. Would the Effendi buy? He opens a little chest, takes out a little bag, and empties it on a marble slab. The marvellous beauty of chalcedony! Apple-green chrysopras, black and white onyx, banded and clouded agates, quartzes of



THE CITADEL, BAB-I SSALAM.

To face page 170.



many shades and colours, and the most remarkable, those gems in which is limned in little the delicate contour of a plant or a tree. As if in their plastic form Nature had endowed them with this token of the mother of the shadow in which they were nourished. . . . Would the Effendi buy? This lot—twenty gems—for ten reals (\$5.00). But the principal market for the '*aqiq*' *'ul-Yamani* (Yaman agates) is Mecca, where they are sold at fancy prices to the pilgrims.

Not far from the lapidaries, as we were turning a narrow lane, I heard a sound that transported me to the Lebanon hills. It was the loom, and the man in the hole, behind the harness, with his hand at the shuttle and his foot on the paddle, might have come here from a Lebanon village. Or might he not have gone up, from these southern mountains, to the Lebanons in the north? The warp-threads are drawn from the loom-harness across a tackle about 20 feet away from it and 12 feet high, from which they hang down to the ground, where they are twisted in two or three hanks around stone weights to keep them taut—the same primitive method which is still adopted in the Lebanons.

But San'a, famous in the past for its fabrics, produces to-day only cotton cloth which is invariably striped in red or yellow or green, and sometimes in the three colours combined. It is also of different weights and textures. A heavy cloth resembling cotton suiting is woven in pieces of 7 yards—enough for a caftan—and sold for three reals; while 7 yards of a lighter material and of double width, for the women, is sold for two. The cotton and the chemical dyes, and sometimes the dyed cotton, are imported from India.

Al-Yaman is also famous in song and story for its steel; its swords and daggers have furnished the poets with many a simile and many a rhyme. But of the popular *jambiyah*, without which no Yamani is ever seen, the belt and the scabbard alone are of purely native industry.



The ornamentations, with the colour motive of red and green in leather, the embossing in silver, and the precious stones in the hilt, are characteristic. The cheaper qualities differ only in the decoration, which is in tinsel ; for every male in the country, even among the children, must be able to acquire a *jambiyah*. Those who cannot afford a complete weapon begin by buying a scabbard. Aye, the dagger—and if not the dagger, the sheath—is the mark of a gentleman. It was the boy of our gardener Bashir who told me this. For one day, seeing that the scabbard he wore at his side was empty, I said : ‘ You have lost your *jambiyah*.’ ‘ No,’ he replied, ‘ my father has not bought me one yet. But he will, *inshallah*.’ He then expatiated on the necessity, the seemliness of acquiring a dagger. ‘ The gentleman (*al-karim*) does not go without it.’ Since then I began to notice how many half-gentlemen—people carrying empty scabbards—there were in San‘a. Nevertheless, the Street of the Jambiyah is one of the busiest in the city.

Its name is not of my own creation. Like the names of other streets, which are taken from what is made or sold in them, it is official. The Street of the Ghat, the Street of the Mada‘ah, the Street of Butter, the Street of Ropes, the Street of Coffee—these are a few. There is even the Street of the Muzaiyanin (Beautifiers, Decorators, *i.e.*, Barbers), where they all pursue their beautifying business. For the fact that one may be living in Bir‘ul-‘Azab, in the west end of the city, and the Street of the Muzaiyenin is in the east end, does not worry, it seems, the municipal authorities. But why should it ? Is not the shaving of thy head and the trimming of thy beard worth a day of leisure ?

Even the rope-maker, sitting in his cubby-hole with one leg crossed and the other stretched, leisurely twirls the twine and puffs at the *mada‘ah* ; the toes of the outstretched leg are used as pegs for the cactus fibre (*salab*), which is dexterously twirled between his palms and then

braided into rope, while in his mouth—between his teeth, like a pipe—is the amber stem of the *mada'ah* tube—aye, he is delightfully, leisurely busy. So, too, is the *mada'ah* maker. I have even seen the cobbler (not in the month of Ramadhan, of course) stitching the colour motif of red and green into a sandal, while the long white tube stretched from the corner of the shop, where the *mada'ah* stood, curled like a snake on the floor, and rose to his mouth to give him the luxury of a smoke. The *mada'ah* may not have been known in Al-Yaman before the Persian occupation, but the Yaman sandals, which are bulky and overwrought, are even pre-Islamic. They have not changed since the days of Ibn-abi-karib, whose sandals are faithfully reproduced in the statuettes I have seen of the Himyar period.

The jewelry, too, I have remarked, is pre-Islamic, and the filigree objects, in silver and gold, made mostly by the Jews, suggest in design, at least, the Himyar art. But the artizans themselves seem older than anything they produce. Here is the jeweller of the Queen of Sheba, sitting cross-legged in his shop, with his tools before him, a boy behind him working at the bellows, and on either side of him an earthen jar, one containing 'the water of life,' the other, the water for the wheel. He is thinned down to angles, dried up like a mummy, with eyes deep in his skull, and a cropped white beard which, being burned in spots, looks as if it had been dyed with *henna*. Bare of arms and legs, with a trip hammer in one of his hands and something held in a vice in the other, he continues at the task of perpetuating the past.

Standing before his shop, my eyes were transfixed upon him, and he, turning his head, likewise gazed upon me. No words were spoken. I was fascinated, and he was, perhaps, amazed. Of a certainty, he had never seen anyone so extravagantly curious, and I have seldom seen anyone so supremely unconscious and calm. He smiled briefly and shook his head, without deflecting his gaze ;

he seemed to be looking at me through the eye of time—he has been sitting there for 3,000 years. Aye, and he made rings and bracelets for the Queen of Sheba ; and he made swords for the kings of Himyar ; and he made the first dagger for the first descendant of Zaid ibn Ali that sat upon the throne of Al-Yaman ;—and here he is still, with the same tools before him, the same materials, the same shop, the same atmosphere, the same jar of ‘the water of life,’ and the same market for his art. He has almost lost the faculty of speech, but his hand still wields the burin and his eye still follows the curve—he has not lost his cunning. .

The brasswork of San’a is not so good as that of Damascus, but it shows the skill of an industrial people, who might have reverted to barbarism, isolated as they are, had not the past been a living and faithful companion of their labours. They have a talent for decoration, an eye for line, and a rather skilful hand. What they make is well designed, but crudely executed. If they had modern tools and better material, however, as well as the means which the mechanical sciences afford, they would doubtless develop a distinct style in the industrial arts.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ARCHITECTURE AND TREASURES

THE first skyscraper of the world was built in San'a of the Yaman, in the days of the kings of Himyar, after the historical visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. She went to Jerusalem, the Arab historian tells us, not only to learn wisdom, but to gratify a loftier desire—she longed for an heir to her throne from the Wisest Man in the world at that time. Whether her longing was satisfied or not is a question on which the historians of Arabia and Abyssinia disagree. That she did come back, however, is an undisputed fact, and that after her arrival in Saba (seventy-five miles east of San'a), she started the vogue of building lofty palaces is also a fact, which is confirmed by a writer on ancient history in the *Arabian Nights*. 'Twenty of the Jinn of King Solomon,' it is set down in that book of wonders, 'were sent, bottled and sealed, to Queen Balqis to build for her the loftiest palace in the world.' After they had done so, they remained in the country, having liked it, and were employed as master builders by the notables of the warrior class. Hence, the skyscraping palaces enumerated by the historian Al-Hamdani, which once adorned Al-Yaman.

But whether the famous Palace Ghamdan<sup>1</sup> was built by these master builders or their human apprentices is not quite clear. The author of the *Iklil* does not mention

<sup>1</sup> Here is a quatrain from one of the Yaman poets, describing the Palace :—

" It rises to the bosom of the sky  
In twenty stories solidly upheld ;  
Beturbaned with the silver of the clouds,  
And with the marble girded and made strong."

the Jinn in connection with it, and what was built after their period, what is built even in our own times, upholds to a certain extent the ancient tradition, for it maintains some of the features of the Sabian skyscrapers and affords us, incidentally, the assurance that Al-Hamdani is one of the few Arab historians that can be relied upon. He gives us an accurate description of the Palace Ghamdan, which stood in the south-east end of the city, in the shadow of Mt. Luqom—it rose to vie with Mt. Luqom and shake off its shadow.

This is the first skyscraper of the world. It was twenty stories high, according to Al-Hamdani, of what is equivalent to 20 feet each, with a belvedere 30 feet long, roofed with three monoliths of alabaster of the same length. When the twentieth story was finished, we are told, the architect stood on the top of the wall, on a spring morning, and, seeing his shadow extend to the foot of Mt. 'Usor, he ordered the masons to stop. 'That is high enough,' said he, 'for the glory and safety of the king.' What is equally remarkable is that this great palace had four different facades, one in white stone, one in red, the third in black, the fourth in green ; and it was adorned with four lions, which stood at its four corners and were so contrived as to echo the four winds.

In the belvedere the Zu-Yazan king set up his throne, and from there he could see the caravans moving out of Zamar and the armies of the enemy approaching from Kawkaban. He could also, while reposing, 'lying on his back,' distinguish, through the alabaster ceiling-roof, so marvellously transparent was it, between the white and the grey pigeons that flew over the palace. There is no doubt that alabaster can be made very transparent, but a block 30 feet long, although possible to quarry, even to reduce to a transparent thickness, could hardly be lifted, it seems, by mere human labour, to the top of a building 400 feet high. But this is a problem which presents itself in the ruins of Baalbek, even in the pyramids, and

for which no satisfactory solution has yet been found. In Al-Yaman, outside the ruins of Ma'rib and Saba, no trace of the ancient palaces remains, for, having been used as fortresses also, they were destroyed and razed to the ground by the Persian, the Ethiopian and the Islamic conquerors.

What I would emphasise as being more significant, from the present point of view, than the ruins or any solution of the problem referred to, is that the people of Al-Yaman still build, like their ancestors, to butt the sky—skybutters, as the Arabic writer puts it. I think, by the way, that the term is more appropriate than skyscraper. For a sail, after which our tall buildings are named, may scrape in its movement the sky, but no structure, however tall, can very well do so, except in an uprooting earthquake. I am not, however, offering skybutter as a substitute, nor would I detract from the grandeur of the skyline of Manhattan by saying that the only original feature of the architecture under it is the steel frame. Yet, many a lofty solitary fortress have I seen in the Upper Yaman, rising over the summit of a mountain, seeming a part of its peak, which reminded me of a Manhattan skyscraper; and even some of the villages—we shall pass them on our way to Hudaidah—have a skyline which, to an American traveller, is curiously reminiscent.

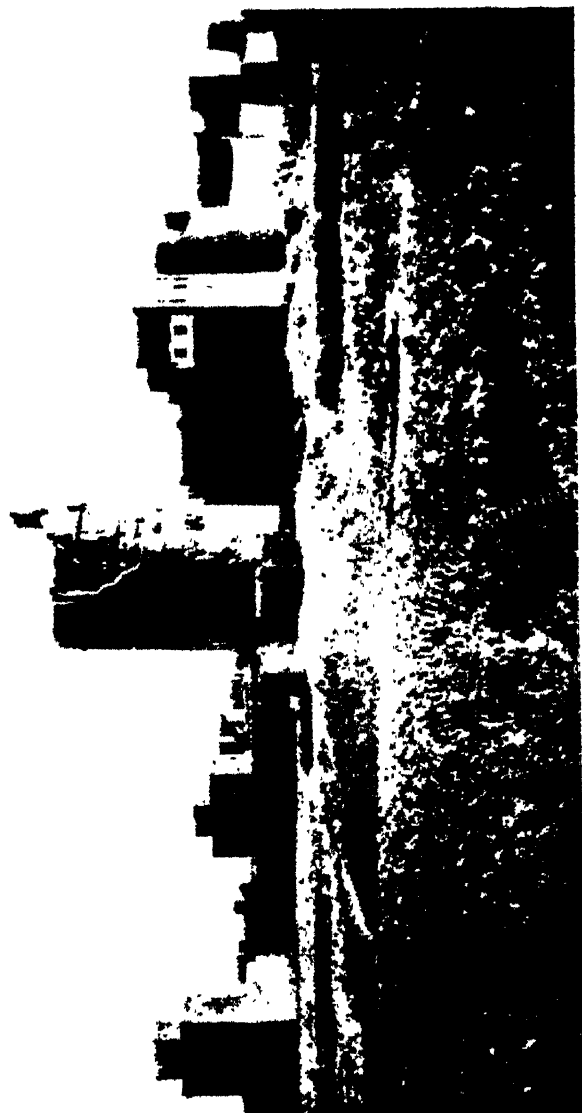
In San'a to-day, the highest structure is not more than 130 feet, or about a third of the height of the Palace Ghamdan. But many of the features of the Himyar architecture, both in form and design, are still retained; like a Zu-Yazan or a Tubba', the citizen of San'a still suns himself—and befuddles himself, moreover, with *ghat*—in a belvedere. Besides, he still uses his house as a fortress and decorates it in the Himyar style with white zones, simulating marble, and with alabaster windows.

Worthy of note also is the fecundity of artistic design in an architecture that has remained for many centuries

free from outside influences. But most of it, I must say, is external. The dedal zones, which are in plaster and always whitewashed, are very elaborate; the lattice-work in the windows is made more agreeable by the decorative frame, which is sometimes in stones of different colours; the loopholes, round, rectangular or stellate, fitted with alabaster or with coloured glass, lend to the façade a quaint charm; and the belvederes, rising in crenelated squares to checker the skyline, give the city a most attractive appearance. The conventional plan, however, whether the house is of white granite or basalt or brown stone, or even of brick, is, with a few variations in detail, the same.

But the mosques of San'a, except for the minarets and white domes, which add to the picturesqueness of the city, are not of interest—I am still on the external side of the subject—to a stranger. What there is within, I have not been permitted to see, for the Zioud, like the Shi'ah of An-Najaf, are irrationally exclusive. The Grand Mosque is the oldest—it was built in the days of the Prophet, about 1,300 years ago—and the least attractive. It is a large imperfect square, with an outside wall about 20 feet high and two plain whitewashed minarets. A peep into it and its court, through the various doors, revealed the usual scene of devotion and diversion and repose. There were people praying, others sleeping, others sitting in circles and chatting. The Zaidi in this is like every other Muslem—his mosque is also his club.

But the muazzen of San'a is unlike any other I have heard anywhere. He is a calamity, especially in the month of Ramadhan; aye, no voice from a minaret can be more barbarous. He cries the *uẓn* in notes so raucous and abrupt that a stranger hearing him would think he is bullying someone in space. The people of Al-Yaman, under the indigo-blue regime of the Imam Yahya, are fast losing the gift of song, for they had it, I am told, and more than once on the road this was confirmed to me in a



A FORTIFIED VILLAGE IN THE YAMAN





surreptitious manner by one of our companions. But the Yamani's speaking voice is, as a rule, very unpleasant. The nasal twang is dominant, in fact, both in song and speech. Moreover, his accent is chopped and whittled—curt and sharp. Only in certain vowels, as the 'a,' is it full at times and expansive.

Unlike his architecture, his voice has no attractive middle notes—it is not harmoniously continuous. Nor is it suggestive of comfort and security within. Judging from it, one would think that the Yamani is a man of uneven pulse, without balance and stamina—one who is easily defeated in a contest of strength or of will. He certainly lacks much of the calm and equanimity which characterise the Muslem of other nations, but he is not as spasmodic as the jerky chaos of his accent indicates. Indeed, he has a staying power and a wealth of endurance which that accent belies. Here, too, appearances deceive. For the comfort and repose which the exterior of a house in San'a suggest, are not always to be found within. There are privacies, to be sure, but remove the harim and nothing remains in the spacious apartments but a few rugs, sometimes very expensive, and a few mattresses and cushions. The entrance is always disappointing, even offensive; nor is there commonly a pleasant retreat, at least, a cosy corner for the mind, on any of the floors between the stable and the belvedere. I have been in a few of the best homes, but only in the reception room of Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy did I see a picture—a framed photograph—on the wall.

Under the buildings, however, in the labyrinthine darkneses, if we read the *Book of Legends* aright, are many guarded treasures of wealth and art. There is, in fact, a subterranean passage under the house of my friend Sheikh Ali Yahya which leads to no one knows where. Nor does anyone dare to explore it. Ignorant and superstitious, the Yamani reads in the *Book of Legends* with bated breath and closes the Book, invoking the pro-

tection of Allah. The Jinn who built the lofty palaces, and who were made the guardians of the hidden treasures in them, are not dead. Even the Imam seems to believe this. The door of the passage under the house of Sheikh Ali is closed with a slab, which is sealed by an Imamic order.

I do believe that there are infinite possibilities for excavations and discovery in Al-Yaman, but no one to-day is permitted to adventure into the mysteries of the past. Even though the ban is lifted, there are no men and no resources in the country for the purpose. Will not the Imam open the outside door, at least, for archeology?

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GHETTO

WHEN we arrived in San'a, the Jews were celebrating the Passover, which ended on the 22nd of Nisan (April), six days before the beginning of Ramadhan, and when the Imam, after his visit to us, a few days later, gave us permission to go out, my first desire was to visit the Ghetto. On the following day, therefore, Saiyed Muhammad, he who accompanied us from Zamar and who was one of the few favoured with a pass to our house, came in to say that the Imam had asked him to go with us to the Quarter of the Jews (Qa'ul-Yahud).

We were accompanied by Hezam and another soldier. But while we were crossing the principal street of Bir'ul-'Azab, we met again our friend the *dowshan* (troubadour), the very one that welcomed us in Shararah Square when we arrived, and he insisted on giving us another send-off. 'O thou sea of benefaction, wo-ho ! O thou image of perfection, wo-ho ! O thou master of the sword, and of all virtues, the lord, wo-ho ! Thrice welcome thou art, we spread for thee our heart, wo-ho ! Enter in peace and reign, Allah increase thy gain, wo-ho !' He shouted these rhymes, rolling sonorously the refrain and gesticulating violently, and when I gave him the Marie Theresa, he kissed it twice, front and back, and begged for 'the honour' of walking a pace with us.

Saiyed Muhammad did not object, and I was very pleased with his answers to my first few questions. The *dowshan* is a public servant—a sort of living social register. He must know the lineage, five generations back at least, of all the notables of the country, so when he *dowshans*

anyone, he must first name him and his father and his grandfather and his grand grandfather (foreigners, of course, excepted), before he launches into the puff. If he makes a mistake in the lineage, at a wedding celebration, for instance, a friend of the slighted one—the *mis-dowshaned*—draws his dagger and throws it before the most distinguished of the guests in protest. He must be the judge, and if the *dowshan* is pronounced guilty of a mistake, by omission or commission, he has to slay a sheep with that dagger of protest. If he is not, it is given to him in satisfaction. Unlike himself as a *dowshan*, he was calm and apparently exact.

But when I asked him if he ever *dowshans* a Jew his tone changed. ‘The Yahuda!’ this with a disdainful gesture. ‘We used to kick him and slap him and spit upon him in the days of the Dowlah. But now, in the days of the Imam, he walks in the street like one of the Sadat. I turn my head away from him, because, if I do not, I must slap or spit.’

‘What if you do,’ I asked. ‘Ah, I must slay a head of cattle. The head of cattle, ya Effendi, is the protection of the Yahuda.’ ‘I do not understand.’ ‘It is this way: the Imam is the Image of Justice, and he gives justice to everyone, even to the Yahuda. Allah confound him. In the days of the Dowlah, no Yahuda could own a house. The Imam came, and he gave them the right to have their own homes. This is more than justice. I spit when I see a Yahuda. But I cannot afford a head of cattle, ya Effendi. It is this way: if anyone strikes a Yahuda, or kicks him, or spits upon him, or insults him in words, he is brought before the Imam or the Qadi, and forthwith he is ordered to slay an ox. Not a cow or a sheep or a goat, but an ox. Oxen are precious, are used in ploughing, and cost thirty or forty reals a head. The defendant slays the ox, and then the case is heard. If he is guilty he pays for it, and in addition, he is jailed. If he is not guilty, the Yahuda pays for the ox. . . .

What they do with the ox? One-third of it is divided between the plaintiff and the defendant, and the other two-thirds are distributed among the soldiers. This is more than justice to the Yahuda, Allah curse him. But the Imam is the Image of Benefaction. I spit, ya Effendi, whenever the name of Yahuda is mentioned. But no one dares to beat him or even to openly insult him. Should anyone be so foolish, all that the Yahuda says to him is, "Remember the ox," and the foolish one becomes sensible.'

We had come, at the east end of Bir'ul-'Azab, to the square that separates it from the Ghetto as the Maidan'ush-Shararah separates it from San'a, and there the *dowshan* took his leave. 'His words are true—all true,' said Hezam, as we were crossing the wide square. 'And if I were not a soldier of the Imam, I would not soil my feet in Qa'ul-Yahud.' Saiyed Muhammad ordered him to be silent. 'Why did you not stop the *dowshan*?' I asked Saiyed Muhammad. 'The *dawashin* (pl.) are fools,' he replied, 'and no one minds them.' 'But what he said about the ox is true?' 'It is the truth.'

What struck me when we first sighted the ghetto was the dead level of the low houses. So different from San'a and Bir'ul-'Azab; not a house more than two stories, and nothing projecting above the roofs, not even the pinnacle or the dome of a synagogue. When I expressed my surprise, Hezam said: 'And should the houses of the Yahoud be like those of the Muslemin?'

Abjectly indeed the little village crouches in the shadow of Mt. 'Usor. But instinct with the feeling of preservation and self-protection, it is compact and consolidated, its roofs leading to each other. Nor does it look slummy. The little terraces are whitewashed and hedged with flower pots; in the principal street, a broad thoroughfare leading to the outer gate, the children play; and neither the dense crowd nor the unctuous raggedness

of the slums is evident except in its business section. There the streets are as narrow and the shops—stalls—as small, but not as interesting as those of San'a. There is nothing, in fact, in the ghetto, except perhaps some ancient Hebrew MSS., which one cannot get in the city. The best jewellers, the big merchants, and those who have an ambition that rises above the two-story equality, have their business in San'a, but their homes are here among their fellow Jews.

Through a narrow path we made our way to a row of stalls raised about 4 feet from the ground, where men with long frowsy side-locks and beards are seated in a kneeling posture, like their Muslem lords, and waiting, patient and composed, for the bounty of the day, which is in the hand of Allah beyond the square and in the hand of Jehova here. But Hezam, with the butt of his rifle, was the busiest man, and when our way was blocked by a few donkeys he lost the patience which hitherto had kept his tongue in check. 'Thou are the father of this nuisance, O Yahuda, Allah strike thee, O Yahuda, in thy soul.' Whereupon he lifted his hand vicariously and struck him in the face. It was outrageous, it was sickening. I protested to Saiyed Muhammad, and refused to go any further. The Saiyed took the soldier by the sleeve, not too violently, I observed, and chided him in half-uttered words. But we did return to the square, and thence, across the principal street and through a narrow lane to the heart of the ghetto.

Here I experienced a very pleasant sensation. My idea of the ghetto, as it exists on the East Side of Manhattan, or even in the Bronx, was totally but happily upset. I looked for clothes lines, for rags, for overflowing garbage cans, for accumulated filth, for babble and confusion, for ragamuffin children, for slatterns with infants at their breasts, for dingy and smelling doorways; but I found instead a labyrinth of incredibly clean lanes, narrowing in places into footpaths,

with little doors on either side, far apart, a few people shuffling sluggishly and quietly hither and thither, a woman's face in a window, a flower pot, a sweet-basil plant. No cries, no noise, no confusion, no smells. When we heard a voice—a woman calling her child or speaking with her neighbour—it was subdued and mellow. A cosy little village indeed, whose people, living so snugly and peacefully, thought I, must be highly civilized.

The men shave their heads, cultivate side-braids, wear black skull caps, a blue tunic down to the knee, and sometimes a robe over it and a sash. The women are not veiled, but they throw a big kerchief of print or of silk over their heads, and they sometimes hold it, in a coquetish manner, across the face. Their pyjamas, tight around the ankle, are like those of a Muslem woman, but the robe above them does not trail, only reaches to a little below the knee in fact, and is invariably blue.

Physically and physiognomically, however, there is little or no difference between the Jew and the Muslem. They are both natives of Al-Yaman, both Arabs, Semites. The Jew has even been in Arabia as long perhaps as the Arab, and longer certainly than the Muslem. But he has been conquered by his brother Semite, made a tributary, and held in subjection. His status in Al-Yaman to-day is similar in every respect to that of his ancestors of Khaibar in the days of the Prophet. There are things which he does not do by choice, and things which he must not do. His blue smock, for instance, is obligatory, and the two-story limitation of his house is a condition of tenure. He is permitted to distil wine and trade in it, but not to sell it to the Muslem ; he is permitted to do business in San'a, but not to live in it ; he is exempt from service in the army, but he must pay tribute.

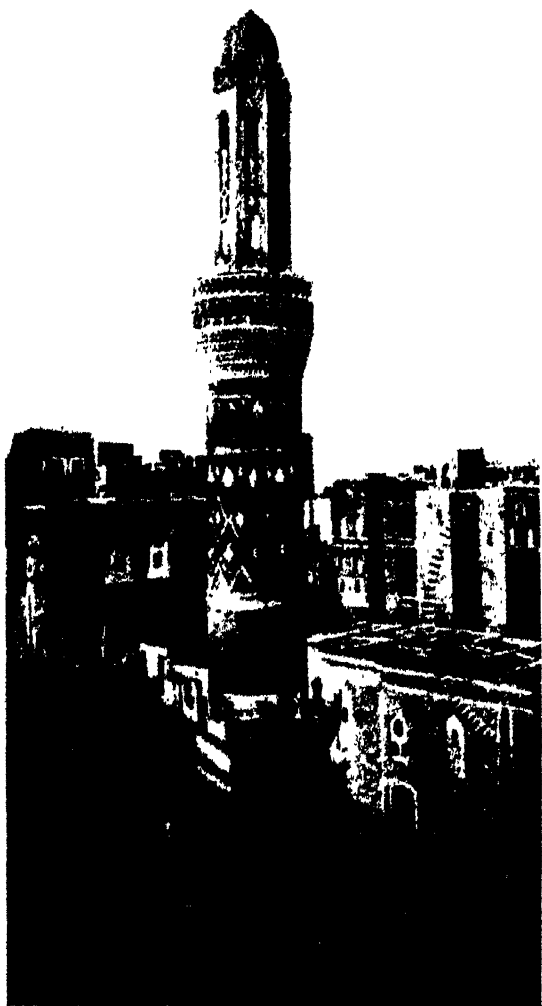
The Jews of Al-Yaman call themselves Timonim, which is a branch, I was told, of the Sephardim ; and there are not more than 20,000 in the Imamdom, most of whom



are in San'a, Yarim, Ibb and Zamar. The ghetto of San'a is the largest, having 6,000 souls, 2,000 of which pay the tribute. But the 6,000 souls have sixteen synagogues, to keep them in the ancient faith, which is the cause of both their subjugation and independence, and a few schools, where the children are taught to speak Hebrew and continue to live in the shadow of the synagogue. There are no big fortunes among them—the richest merchant is not worth more than \$100,000 ; they have heard of the Zionist Movement and the National Home ; they receive newspapers from Palestine and they believe that the King of the Jews now sits on his throne in Jerusalem ; but they have no desire to leave Al-Yaman. 'Are you contented here,' I asked one of the Rabbis. 'We live in security,' he replied.

In security ! One of the latter Himyar kings, Zu'n-Nawwas, in whose days the Muslem Arabs of Al-Hijaz invaded Al-Yaman, first embraced Al-Islam and soon changed his mind and embraced Judaism. He also sought to impose his new faith upon his subjects, especially upon the Christians of Najran. He had trenches dug, in which he threatened to bury them alive if they did not become Jews like himself. But they clung to their faith, and Zu'n-Nawwas carried out his threat. He exterminated the Christians of Najran, 'burned their Bible and razed their church to the ground.' The Muslims he had infuriated by first embracing and then renouncing their faith. The Jews may proudly say that a Jewish king once ruled Al-Yaman, but they are still paying for it.

The common people, like the *dowshan* and Hezam, may be rabid in their hatred, but the cultured are subtle and more malevolent. Saiyed Muhammad is even ironic. 'The Jews must wear side-locks, ya Ameen, that we may not kill them by mistake in times of war. They must ride donkeys only, because they cannot ride horses ; safety, ya Ameen, before gentility. They must not build their



THE MINARET OF THE MOSQUE.

To face page 186.



houses more than two stories high—if one of them fell from his roof, he will not break his head. They must pay tribute so as not to forget their origin, and to appreciate always the tolerance and benevolence of the Prophet, the peace of Allah upon him. Consider, too, the justice of the Imam, and the ox. Many of them welcome the blow, ya Ameen, because it brings with it a third of the ox. We give them a lease on the land for ninety-nine years, but we do not encumber them with absolute ownership. We permit them to make wine, but not to sell it to us. We deprive ourselves that they may have more to drink. But we permit them to offer their daughters to us as servants, whom we take into the harim and treat like our own slaves. We also bestow upon those of them who deserve it the boon of Al-Islam.’

Their daughters ! The Arabs who, like the *dowshan* and Hezam, would not soil their feet in Qa’ul-Yahud, are not honest about it. For those who cannot order pleasure to their homes must walk barefoot to it ; and in the ghetto are the three joys of which the poet sings—wine, a fair face and flowers. There was also *hasheesh* in the days of the Turks, and there is still a lute and a voice to charm. The Zaidi may hate and fulminate, but he cannot resist.

Only a few people, I have remarked, had permission to visit us. But one day a Jew, of whom I had bought some ancient coins, came into the *majlis* unannounced, and I thought that Hezam was away or asleep at his post. He was not, however, for the Jew said that he permitted him to enter. He had come with some rare objects in filigree and some more coins of the Himyar period ; so I made another purchase and paid him for it. He was happy when he got up to go, but when he reached the door Hezam, holding the rifle high in one hand and laying the other upon his shoulder, made him stop. Whereupon the Jew put his hand into his pocket, took out some money, and gave it to him. Whether he had bribed the Zaidi to

let him enter, promising a part of the profit, or the Zaidi soldier blinked at his entrance, saying to himself, 'He'll be richer when he comes out,' I am not certain. But I have no doubt that when a soldier has a little money to spend he goes to the ghetto.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ZIOUD

‘ My heart is a winter,  
The night in it is long ;  
Her heart is a garden,  
I water with my song.’

BEHIND our garden wall from sunrise till sunset every day, the *saqiah*-boy, son of the gardener Bashir, trolled in a sombre monotony these lines. ‘ He sings,’ said his father, ‘ for the camel (of the *saqiah*), and she stops working when he stops singing. But Bashir, who works more than the camel—no one sings for him.’

It was his business to come into our courtyard every day to empty the fountain which watered the garden ; and one evening, when I was pacing outside to shorten the long hours of captivity, he approached me timidly and salaamed. ‘ Sidi is resting, *inshallah*. It is good, our country, for the soul—praise be to Allah. But for the body, for the heart, for the head . . .’ He sighed, as he praised Allah again. ‘ I work very hard, ya Sidi—the fountain, the garden, the *saqiah*, they are all upon me (dependent). I am very tired, Allah knows. The Imam knows how much I work, but it does not worry him. Five reals a month is all I get—five reals—and never during the five years I have been here did I receive an *ikramiyah* (bakhshish). Never did the Imam say : “ Bashir, you are working very hard and you are faithful, here is for your reward.” Never, never. Everything, from the *saqiah*-camel’s feed to the last root in the garden is (dependent) upon Bashir, and if anything is wanting—knock, knock ! Comes the soldier with orders from the

Imam. And I am rated, and sent out with a curse—with a curse, ya Sidi.' He sighed again, and looking in the direction of the Imam's *majlis*, he said : 'Allah is all-knowing, all-seeing.'

Bashir also prayed—prayed, like a good Muslem, five times a day. In the month of Ramadhan he came into our courtyard with the others—the soldiers, the servants and the cook—who made their ablutions in the fountain, spread a mantle or a mat under the apricot tree, and prayed their morning prayers, their noon prayers, their afternoon, sunset, and evening prayers. Our servant Madani, too, who seldom prayed before, genuflected as frequently as a Zaidi. He even became respectable, for he would not pray without a prayer-rug, and as such he used his turban cloth, the very cloth with which I saw him once clean our shoes. But the Ramadhan piety of the boy, considering alone his frequent quarrels with Sheikh Saleh, deserves nothing better. Nor does that of the Zioud, for that matter. I know of no people who pray so much and whose prayers in the sight of Allah must be like the dust in a whirlwind.

The two Frenchmen, who came to San'a when we were there, lived in the house adjoining ours, and we had the same cook. 'Who are they?' I asked him the day they arrived; and he replied, with an expression of disgust : 'Nasara, pigs!' We were Christian Arabs, of course, and there is a difference. The Europeans are only Nazarene pigs. One of the soldiers serving them, who would come into our house for water, I saw one day filling a jug at the fountain, in which they all perform their ablutions. 'Have they no water for washing?' I asked. 'They want to drink,' was his curt reply. 'And do you give them the water of the fountain to drink?' He had filled his jug, and he turned away saying : 'Nasara, pigs! they deserve no better than this.'

Allah, I thought, will yet visit the land of the Zioud, but I was not going to wait till he did. I brought the

matter to the attention of the Imam. These people, who have been allowed to come to San'a, whether they are merchants or spies or makers of poison gas, ought to be treated with the wonted generosity of an Arab. Albeit, they pray, the Zioud, to 'the Merciful, the Compassionate, the God of all Creation.' The gardener Bashir came every day to empty the fountain, which flowed in a neglected plot of land and watered only a few rows of onions and beans. So much water gone to waste ! And so much like the prayers of the Zaidi, which flow in a spiritual garden overgrown with thistles. Aye, there is nothing there to water but hate—hate of the world outside the little Yaman, hate of the Nasara (Nazarenes) that venture through it, hate of the Jews in it, hate even of the children of their own faith, Muslems, but not Zioud, like themselves.

Hunchback Ahmad, the sentry, came to me one day with a swelling in his neck, which I painted with a tincture of iodine. He returned the following morning : ' Much pain last night, but the swelling is less.' After a few more applications, he came to thank me. ' Thank the " Christian pigs ", ' I said, ' for this medicine is of their invention, is made in their own land.' ' Allah reward them, ya Ameen.' There was compunction and humility in his voice. ' Allah is all-seeing, and his mercy is all-encompassing.' Other soldiers came to me with sores, with wounds, with swellings, which I was safe in treating externally, and I reminded them every time that the cure was first from Allah and then from the ' Nasara pigs,' who discovered drugs and anæsthetics—after being taught medicine by your own ancestors, ye most ignorant of Arabs !—to combat disease and diminish pain. Most of them, I must say, were favourably impressed ; they came to me as Zaidis, and they went back as Muslems to their broader faith, whose founder himself says : ' Man is brother to man, whether he likes it or not.'

When the servant of the Frenchmen came again for



water, hunchback Ahmad shook his stick at him and said : ' I will report you to the Imam, *billah* ! if you take drinking water for them from the fountain.' No words from the lips of a Zaidi gave me greater pleasure, for I realized that the goodness in him, as in every other man, could be evoked by the right word and the right deed. A little of it, at least. But the Saiyeds are responsible for the fanaticism and cruelty of the people—the Saiyeds who would keep the common people in ignorance or teach them what is worse than ignorance, namely, that only a Zaidi is a right Muslem, and only he who joins the *jihad* is a right Zaidi.

There are even impediments in the broader faith—impediments born of dogma, religious formula, and theological imbecilities. How often, indeed, is practice spoiled by dogma. Take the question of *wadhu* (ablution), which must precede every prayer of the day, and which must be performed according to a rigid formula that includes the hands down to the elbows, the face and head, the feet and legs, the mouth by gargling, and then, holding the head back, a few drops with the right hand—the finishing touch—upon the nose and forehead. Now, one would think that a man washing himself thus, five times a day, would be exceptionally clean. I doubt it. I know—I have seen—how the ablution is performed. In ninety out of 100 cases, it is done in a slap-dash, perfunctory manner, without drying, except sometimes the face with the sleeve. It is done, not for cleanliness, but for Allah and the Prophet ; and were it not for a Koranic dogma, they would not be such victims of ablution. They would then learn to wash themselves, if only once a day, for the sake of cleanliness.

Come to mind, the mestizos of Yucatan, those half-pagan, half-Christian Indians, in immaculate white garments, inimitably clean—outwardly and inwardly clean. But these ever-praying Zioud ! I have often had to see them, to my disgust, make themselves clean, before

they stood before Allah. Most of them just sprinkle the water over their hands and feet—the soldiers are afraid of washing off the indigo blue—and they all love to gargle and gurgle, making a lot of noise, and using the same water for the purpose with which they had washed their feet. The most disgusting process of ablution, the filthiest way of cleansing ever conceived of by man or inspired by an angel.

But the Koran is the father of many other things of wonder, which in more advanced Muslem countries are now relegated to obscurity and oblivion. The Minister of Religious Foundations, a venerable Sheikh of learning and culture, came once to see me. He was the Imam's delegate of peace to the Turks, and he is noted for his sagacity and political acumen. I discovered this for myself in a very pleasant conversation with him. But when he asked me where America was, the closet was open and there, alas, was the skeleton. Not to his ignorance of geography would I allude. No ; we have Government ministers whose knowledge of geography is more deplorable. 'America, from where we are in Al-Yaman,' I said, 'is about the opposite side of the globe—somewhere under us.' The venerable and learned Sheikh shook his head. 'That is confusing—it must be an error. For how can America be under us, when the Koran says that the world is flat? To us, the truth is in the Book.' But I repeated the school-book arguments, as if to a child, and he shook his head again. I then told him that we could go around the globe entirely by sea these days. His look asked for an explanation. Presuming then that we were at Aden, I took him to Japan, to San Francisco, down to the Panama Canal, up to New York, across the Atlantic to Gibraltar, thence to Port Said and down the Red Sea back to Aden. He rose suddenly, made his salaam, and, without saying another word, walked away.

Our friend Saiyed Muhammad is also learned in the

law and the Hadith, and very strict in the observance. No contradiction ever shakes his faith ; there is no doubt in the heart of a Muslem, and when the Hadith contradicts the Koran, the Faqih is there to give decision and assurance, even though he has to go in a hundred circles to do so. I asked the Saiyed about the rights of a woman whose husband deserts her.

‘ If he has any money or property,’ he spoke with the deliberate calm of a judge, ‘ or if his own relatives have any money or property, she has a right to the use of it for the support of herself and her children.’

‘ Has she a right to a divorce ? ’

‘ There is a law in the Zaidi code that if a husband deserts his wife for a period of one hundred and twenty years—the utmost stretch of human life—the presumption then is that he is dead, and his wife has a right, after having the marriage contract annulled, to re-marry.’

‘ A long wait for the end of a man’s fidelity.’

‘ Yes, that was the law till the present Imam, who is the incarnation of wisdom and justice, changed it to three years. But the wife has to prove, nevertheless, that the husband left nothing for her support. So long as she is fed and clothed, her attachment and her faithfulness must continue.’

‘ And the hunger of the heart ? ’

‘ A woman who is fed and clothed should praise Allah and be satisfied,’ said Saiyed Muhammad in the judiciary manner.

I then asked him about the diseases that are most prevalent in San’a, and he said : ‘ There are a few.’

‘ What, for instance ? ’

‘ Fever, colds, headaches.’

‘ And what do you do in case of fever ? ’

‘ Nothing. We bow to the will of Allah and await his mercy.’

‘ You take no medicine ? ’

‘ Some people, whose faith slips under them, take

*salfat* (sulphate of quinine), if they find it in the Souq.'

'Otherwise your doctor and your medicine is Allah?'

'Just.'

'No contagious diseases like small-pox?'

'Small-pox there is.'

'What do you do for the patient?'

'We leave him alone.'

'You don't vaccinate?'

'No.'

'You don't isolate?'

'No.'

'But what do you do to guard against contagion?'

'There is no contagion in Al-Islam. These are the words of Allah, as set down in the Book. "I will shake hands with a leper, without fear of catching the disease."'

'And if you do?'

'It is the will of Allah.'

'But does not the Prophet in the Hadith say: "Fly from a leper as from a lion"?''

'Yes, that is the Hadith. But the Commentators tell us that there is no real contradiction between the words of Allah and the words of the Prophet. We are told to fly from the leper, because if we, too, get the disease, we are likely to attribute it to contagion and thus expose our faith in the word of Allah to doubt and destruction.'

'It is for the sake of your faith, therefore, that you are told to fly from the leper.'

'Yes; and our faith is our health.'

'Even in an epidemic?'

'Yes; there is no contagion in Al-Islam.'

'And those who catch the disease by contact?'

'Not by contact—no. A disease spreads by the decree of Allah, and not by contagion.'

'Did it ever occur to you that by isolating the patient you might put a stop to the decree of Allah?'

'That is sacrilege. Man is the slave of Allah; and

the slave questions not, nor dares to interfere, with the will of the Master, praised be he and exalted.'

'Do you often have small-pox in San'a?'

'There is always some, here and there.'

'Are there any venereal diseases?'

'I do not understand.'

I explained, and the Saiyed's face and eyes and hands emphasised his reply.

'No, no, Allah be praised!'

In fact, there are no venereal diseases and no tuberculosis at all in this part of the Yaman. The moral atmosphere is too exclusive for the one, and the air is too dry for the other. The Yaman, one would say, is in itself a quarantine—a people quarantined by religion.

'The air of San'a is so good,' says the historian, 'that meat may remain five days without spoiling. . . . Even its water-closets do not smell. . . . Old men wear light clothes in winter and heavy clothes in summer, without hurt.' The same historian tells us how the method of preserving meat was discovered by a man of San'a, who had started to cook some meat in vinegar, when the King sent for him and despatched him with a message to Mecca. On his return, sixty days after, he found the pot where he left it. He opened it, and the meat in it smelled good. He re-cooked it, and it was more savoury than if it were fresh.

Since that time no one has been making any discoveries in Al-Yaman. But its people, when a traveller comes among them, have eyes that perceive and desires that are not easily abated. I would not, however, do the people an injustice, for it is not of them that I would especially warn you, but of the Saiyeds their masters—those who wear more than one robe and have a tongue for high-falutin speech. Aye, the Saiyeds, creatures of pomp and vainglory, with their voluminous sleeves, flowing mantles, heavy turbans—sitting on high cushions and chewing *ghat* and offering their hands to be kissed—riding on



THE SCHOLARS.



WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE PLAINS.

To face page 196.



caparisoned mules with servants walking on either side of them and servants before them—these great Saiyeds are, nevertheless, like children when they see anything with the traveller that they fancy.

The first time one of them came to see us, he discovered my steamer rug, examined it carefully, but said nothing. The second time he mentioned it, admiring its fabric and design. The third time he dilated on the isolation of San'a, the impossibility of having anything of worth sent you from the outside world. It never arrives. 'That is deplorable,' is all I said ; and I still have the rug.

Another Saiyed, seeing me reading a book of verse—a presentation copy—asked me to give it to him. 'I shall write to the poet in Cairo and ask him to send you one,' I said. But when Sheikh Saleh, in an attack of Ramadhan temper, threw our belongings out of his room, our friend was visiting us, and he saw among the things a thermos bottle—an unbreakable. It certainly did not break, and Constantine, taking it up, was tempted to exhibit his knowledge. 'Mica, it is made of mica. You have plenty of mica in your mountains, but no brain and no energy to get it out and use it.' The Saiyed had the bottle in his hand, and that was the end of it.

By all means bring presents with you when you travel in Al-Yaman, but in your effects or on your person carry nothing valuable or conspicuous. My watch was not valuable, except as a souvenir, and one day, as it needed repair, I asked the Saiyed if there was a watchmaker in the city. 'Give it to me,' he said, 'I will have it repaired—on my head and eye (most gladly).' I gave him the watch and the silk cord with it. Two days passed, and no Saiyed. 'Gone, the watch,' said Constantine, with malicious glee. But I still cherished a hope, and on the third day, to be sure, the Saiyed came.

'Peace upon thee. The air of San'a is agreeable to thee, *inshallah*. Felicity resides in Al-Yaman—this, in the Hadith—and she comes to visit thee, *inshallah*.'



'In thy person,' I said, trying to check the flow. -

'Thy well-wisher passes by her house, in the guiding light of Allah, and is content to see through a corner of the veil of one of her handmaidens. . . . Contentment is the principal wealth of a Muslem. But we wish our guest a felicity complete.'

He offered me the rose he was twirling in his hand, and continued : 'From her garden. The Yaman rose has more flame than perfume ; our air sucks up the dew and the nectar—robs our gardens.'

'The perfume of Al-Yaman is in its air,' I remarked, hoping again to bring him to a point.

'The spirit of the spices, too. That is why the birds do not sing very much ; they are drunk with it—their felicity is complete. We wish thee the felicity of the birds. . . . Thou likest the *shazirwan* (fountain) ? The water hath a pleasing voice.'

Here, I thought, was my opportunity, and I said with a sense of relief : 'The ancients also used it to tell the time.'

'I have read so in the books. But the inventor of the watch is more ingenious. Thy watch is excellent.'

I praised Allah for the happy *denouement*.

"Its movement," the watchmaker said, "is the best he has ever seen." It did not need much repair.'

Weary of the circumlocution, I asked bluntly, pulling out my purse : 'How much did you pay ?'

'No, no. Nothing. Only a trifle, which in thy kindness, thou wilt overlook. Pray, for my sake, open not thy purse.'

Whereupon he thrust his hand into his bosom and pulled out the silk cord—pulled it all out, and there was no watch at its end ! He fumbled into the bosom of his outside robe, and into the bosom of his inside robe, and into the inner bosom of his third robe, his face changing in expression, but not in colour, and he clapped one hand upon the other. 'I would rather lose my life, *billah* !

than lose it. It must have fallen from the cord—I tied it thus.’ (He might have attached it to the link if he knew better. I think he knew better not to.) ‘It may have fallen in the house. I will look—I will inquire—I will investigate. I would rather lose my life than lose it, *billah!*’

And forthwith he went to look for the watch—but he never came back.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ABOUT WOMEN AND THE WEATHER

IN the world no subject is more common and less veiled than the weather ; in Arabia no subject is more veiled and less common than women. But neither the one nor the other is ever discussed seriously among the Arabs, or ever thought of as having any effect upon the daily life of man. The one is inevitable whatever it is, and a man must bear it or enjoy it, without much waste of speech ; the other is inevitable where she is, and a man's business is to keep her there, without being extravagant in thought or sympathy. What happens behind the screens of seclusion—in Arabia and other Muslem countries where seclusion is still the rigid rule—is not, however, and has never been, a mystery, except in romance. But in reality the subject is as open as the weather. The heavy clouds are seen, the thunder is heard, the sunshine is felt, within and without. There is only a lattice screen between the harim and the world, and through the screen, or the servants and slaves whose personality is often like a lattice, much of the truth about the Muslem women has reached the world. Arabic books also, like *Al-Aghany*, *Nafh'ut-Tib*, *Al-Kashkoul*, even the *Hadith*, to say nothing of the *Book of a Thousand Nights*, are full of feminine gossip, and most of it is delightful and credible.

The weather in Arabia may be more mysterious, and really treacherous. The wind storm comes unannounced ; the temperature turns a somersault between sunset and dusk or between dawn and sunrise ; the humidity lulls you to sleep of an afternoon and then stabs you in the back ; and the nights, even in a midsummer moon,

shake off every influence, every vestige of the tutelar deity of the day. It is never safe to surrender wholly to the idea that you are in tropical climes ; you have seen how, coming up from Aden, we had to seek a shelter from the sun.

The best time to come up to San'a is late in March or early in April. Before that or after, it is either too cold or too hot ; and there is likely to be rain, which adds to the difficulties of mountain roads. In either case, there is but little shelter or relief, no shade on the way, no fire in the houses. The climate of San'a is equable, in spite of its cold nights, but enervating. The air is very dry, but there isn't in it that touch of the whip which gives one the feeling of being in a race for a prize. The effect is more of the latitude than the altitude. The 15th degree from the equator overcomes the effect of 8,000 feet above the sea. It is, after all, the tropic sun, especially from April on, and the thermometer during the latter part of this month ranged between 75° and 80° F. in the shade.

One must be very careful, however, about keeping warm at night. I suffered the first few days, because I slept, as I do in New York, even in the winter, with but a light covering, and although I used after that a quilt and my steamer rug, I did not feel uncomfortably warm. My mattress was spread on the floor, of course, and I kept the door and the window of my room wide open. The soldiers and servants thought that I had no desire to live.

It rained on the last day of April—the first summer or monsoon rain—to gladden the heart of everyone, the strangers in the land before the natives. Indeed, it was so good to see the gathering clouds, and to hear the thunder, and to listen to the patter on the pavement of the courtyard. Here is something familiar, something intimate in a country where everything is alien and distant and rarely sympathetic. The rhythmic play of the rain in the fountain, gracing its oval surface with an ever-shifting and undulating mosaic of liquid silver and steel,

was even more charming as an echo of a distant love-lisping, heart-stirring music.

It fell heavily, the rain ; fell in an envelope of calm ; everything else was hushed. Even the birds, who were indiscreet in their joy when it first came in a drizzle, took quietly to their shelter when it began to pour in earnest. From an elevation in the courtyard I caught a glimpse of Mt. 'Usor, dark and foreboding ; the rain clouds were from the south-west ; but above Mt. Luqom the definition of the milky horizon was not yet totally effaced. Soon a steel-grey mantle covered its summit, and the sky, in its gradations, was a symphony in sable.

But it did not last more than an hour—an hour that was to me more transporting than any other universally familiar scene in Nature. The birds have no country ; the bullfrog is at home in every pool ; the cricket needs no passport to the night ; the rose, even in the indigo turban of a Zaidi, speaks of one soil, one sun, one dew ; the walnut and the apricot and the pomegranate are the subjects of one region, one zone ; and everywhere in the stillness of dawn, the air repeats the same words of peace, the breeze whispers the same words of delight ; but nothing like the rain gave me that feeling of security and satisfaction, which are born of confidence alone. The rain is a brother who sings of the homeland everywhere—a brother who makes you realise that, after all, even the land of the Zioud is of our world, and not outside of the divine dispensation.

So, too, the women of this land. For even though their voices are not heard, their faces are not seen, their presence is not outwardly felt, they occupy the same position biologically—and this, after all, is still essential—as their sisters of the Western world. Those of them who have beauty or strength of character or a gift of any kind, attain thereby a superiority over those with whom they sororise in the harim as over the men their masters ; a superiority which, in its concentrated form and free from

the ravaging elements of the open social world, must be more gratifying to a woman. But whether it is more beneficial to the race is another question. For life is a fulfilment, not only biologically, but sociologically as well ; and the worries of the woman of the harim will begin when she is emancipated.

Meanwhile she dallies and daintifies behind the veil ; and in San'a, the Sabian city of dalliance, she flaunts a token outside the veil, when she ventures abroad. She wears a hatpin, but not a hat, and this hatpin is made by the jeweller of the bazar of silver or gold or metal with filigree or precious stones gracing its head. But it is not made to kill—the point is dull. I said, a hatpin. Every woman wears two, however, which she sticks in her hair on either side of the head over the ears, the heads protruding 2 or 3 inches in front ; from them hangs a veil of dark light material, while the kerchief of the head, worn like a soft hat, puffed out, is supported by them. An additional touch of adornment are the flowers—roses, carnations, or twigs of sweet basil—which she wears upon the pins ; two nosegays hanging down along the hidden cheeks which they symbolise. Eyes of black onyx—the pin-heads—and cheeks of pink carnation—the veil conceals nothing. Nowhere else in Arabia have I seen this decorative and symbolical feature of the veil, and I believe it is pre-Islamic, Himyarite or Sabian.

But seclusion in San'a is practised with a vengeance. I take as an instance the first man in the land, whom people follow and try to emulate. The women of the Imam are never seen or heard by any man, not even by the male servants that attend upon them. There is always a boy, between the age of seven and ten, to whom they unveil and unseal their lips. He is their ambassador to the servants, and when he reaches the age of ten he is dismissed, and another ambassador, three years younger, is appointed. The Imam has, moreover, a curious domestic arrangement. His four wives are not all kept

in San'a ; two of them are sent on a vacation for two or three years to Shahara and Sowda respectively, while the other two live in separate houses in Bir'ul-'Azab ; and at the end of the vacation the exchange is made, that is, the two wives on leave come back to take the place of the two on duty. The children always accompany their mothers. But here is, if the above is not, a bit of real gossip. The favourite wife of the Imam is the daughter of Ibn'ul-Mutawakkil, who was a rival candidate to the Imamate ; and when the Saiyeds are at loggerheads with him about a national or political question, it is through her by means of an intimate harim or a chain of hugger-muggering harims leading ultimately to her, that they get him to yield to their views. It is idle to say that the Arab woman has nothing to do in the affairs of State.

In the days of the Turks, there was gaiety in San'a, and a semblance of social life. The lute, the jug of wine and the dancing girl constituted an entertainment, which was given by many an host. Besides, women walked freely in the streets, unveiled coquettishly, and even permitted a stranger with a camera to take their pictures. But now—'You take the picture of a woman,' said Bashir the gardener, 'and the Imam will take her head. No more flirtation in the streets—no more prostitutes in the appearance. But they do this.' Bashir, who is a born mimic, lifted the end of his sheep-skin coat over his face with one hand and the end of his tunic up above the knee with the other. 'And *hasheesh*, there was plenty,' he continued, 'and wine, and *din-a-din yan-a-din din, dan* (imitative of the lute), and the city was like this——' he swung his torso and shook his hands before his eyes.

Bashir would make an excellent actor. His gestures are telling and often amusing. A snap of the fingers, common among the people of the Yaman, expresses distance, or wonder, or admiration. Marvellous ! preceded or accompanied with a snap of the thumb and index.



ON THE WAY FROM THE WELL.

To face page 201.





It's done—ditto. Get on his back, the horse of the Imam, and—snap ! Let the lightning catch you. The arm, held up at right angle and jerked backward two or three times, expresses sarcasm, ridicule, contempt. He is very generous, the Imam. And up goes the arm, a very forceful gesture. The hand held out with the three middle fingers folded over the palm and the other two sticking out like horns, means never, impossible, incredible. Anything that is small, a boy or a shadow or a tree, is illustrated with the arm and open palm held up, without an accompanying motion. He has four, the Imam, and up goes the arm, meaning four little children. A stroke of the palms, quick and brisk—finished, it is decreed, it is the will of Allah. Clapping the hands upon the cheeks or upon the legs—woe's me, Allah is my refuge. The hand held up with the fingers drawn together—a trifle ; held up to the nose—very sweet, attractive ; held down with a quick movement, like a bird pecking at something—put your hand in your purse and be generous.

Bashir, who always rambled, but did not bore, also told me how a brave Yamani tricks and attacks a hyena, of which there are many around San'a. He takes the first piece of cloth that is convenient—his turban or his coat—folds it around his hand up to the elbow, and sticks it in the beast's mouth, while, quick with the other, he plunges the dagger into his heart. He took off his coat and drew his dagger while speaking, and the illustration was dramatic.

## CHAPTER XX

### ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS AND RHYMES

HASAN IBN ALI'L-HUJRI has a pass-card to every house in San'a, and although he carries a bag on his shoulder, he is neither a peddler nor a broker of the bazar. He favours you when he knocks at your door, he honours you when he consents to a sale. The Imam himself is one of his customers, and the sentry at the gate kisses his hand when he bids him enter. Indeed, the visit of Hasan ibn Ali is considered an omen of good fortune in the ancient city of the Sabians.

He is a little man with a little white beard, blighted in spots, a shaven mustache, a sparkling eye, a broad forehead, and a contour as delicate as a profile on a Roman coin. His hands betray a long line that wielded nothing but the pen, and his gesture speaks of centuries of idleness. But Hasan ibn Ali is seldom idle.

He came to see me almost every day, and with a most ingratiating smile. His bag on one shoulder, his scarf, barred in yellow and red, on the other, his rosary of black beads always in his hand ; and he said : ' Salaam, O worthy one,' as he doffed his sandals at the door—the same style sandals that were worn by the Sabians 2,000 years ago. The last man in the world to remind you of a book agent is Hasan ibn Ali. Yet, a book agent is he, or rather, a collector of, and dealer in, MSS. ; the only one in San'a, where books are written, but never published.

Invariably, he began with a little gossip. Laying down his bag, he sat cross-legged on the carpet in the centre of the room, refusing a cushion as well as a cigarette.

‘Hearken, O model of excellence, our lord the Imam has written a poem and you shall see it. The subject? That is yet a secret. . . . Saiyed Ali, his Chamberlain, is suffering from dyspepsia or, perhaps, only from the Ramadhan temper. The Chief of Staff is selling his antiques and going back to Stamboul. “San’a is too dull,” he says. If he read books, he would not think of San’a. . . . But the most important news—a man in Zamar has the seventh volume of the *IKLIL*, and he wants 150 reals for it. I may go to Zamar to see. It is worth a hundred.’

He then laid his rosary on the floor and opened his bag. ‘But I have a book which you will greatly enjoy. It is a book of poetry, the only copy extant, and it is perfect and complete. Beautifully written—behold, O worthy one—on most beautiful paper: a silken page, whose edges are gilded by Time. The illuminations in red and blue and gold—see, are they not exquisite? The title page, is it not a gem of decoration? The leather binding, is it not rare? And the colophon—read it, O most worthy one. My beard!—I swear it is authentic.’

He caressed the volume as he spoke, and would not let me touch it until he had finished his speech. ‘Read this first,’ turning to the colophon . . . “and he finished the writing of it on the evening of the seventh day of Ramadhan of the year nine hundred and thirty-one of the Hijrah.” This is the seventh day of Ramadhan, Allah prolong thy days, O worthy one, and the book is four hundred and ten years old exactly. Kiss a book on its birthday and it will bring you good fortune for a whole year after that; buy it, and it will be a charm against the evil eye forever.’

I kissed the volume where Hasan had pressed his reverential lips.

‘Now, open it where you list—taste of the first *qasidah* that unveils before you. This is not common poetry; the author was a native of San’a and, by the testimony of

the critics of his day and ours, he was the greatest poet of his time. But no testimony is needed to prove what the model of excellence will readily observe. A singer who shames the bulbul, a wine to surprise even the vineyards of Ar-Rowdhah, a flame that was stolen from the sun of Al-Yaman, a light-heartedness to make the most sluggish stream dance like the water in the fountain—all these are preserved, are living, in the beautiful pages of this volume. . . . Will you permit me? Read, Allah preserve thee, the opening lines of this *qasidah*.’

‘ The stars aspire to thy throne,  
The lions long to kiss thy feet :  
Beloved one, thou art alone  
Where love and mercy are complete.’

The *Diwan* of Mousa ibn Yahya Bahran, in praise of his Lord and Master, Sharaf ud-Din ul-Mutawakkil, one of the great warriors and conquerors of his time, is, of a truth, an object of manifold delights. To touch it, to lull the eye upon its page, to read its lines aloud, to contemplate the making of it, is a rare joy. Bahran is a real poet, and a lover. The Imam his Patron was but an excuse for his poetic expression, which is often full of grace and charm.

‘ If thou canst not come thyself, Belovéd,  
Send thy shadow with thy magic art ;  
Clothe desertion with the silk of promise—  
Even thy promise heals my broken heart.’

He wrote also in the stanza form of the Andalusian lyric poets, and his art is often as pleasing as his expression. The connection in a *qasidah*, for instance, between the opening amatory lines—what is real poetry—and the laudatory portion, is always aptly and graceful accomplished. ‘ You break my heart, O Zainab, but I know of one who can heal it,’ and he launches into praise of his Patron the Imam. Even the begging manner, which

seems inseparable from most of the poetry of the Arabs, is engaging in Bahran, and often amusing.

‘Thy hand, from want, O Master, frees ;  
 Thy wont to give and mine to please—  
 The singer gets, at least, the lees.  
 What is my capital and wealth,  
 But thine own liberal ways ?  
 And of what use my wit and health,  
 If I sing not thy praise ?’

Hasan ibn Ali, in leaving the volume with me, placed me under no obligation, he said, to buy it. But I would have gladly done so, had he set on it a price which I could meet. A few days later he brought me the eighth volume of the *IKLIL* to read and the secret of the Imam’s poem. But the latter was no longer necessary, since the poem itself was in my possession.

The story of it is not without interest to the reader, especially since the Muse of San’a, as well as that of my fellow traveller, was involved. Indeed, every poet in the city was set rhyming furiously, and it came about this way. When I placed a ban upon the war-talk of comrade Constantine, he took to rhyming, and I had to listen to his effusions. His speciality is laudatory verse—the regular *qasidah* which begins with : ‘Thou hast invaded, O fair one, my heart,’ and leads down to the ‘invading splendor’ of some bloodthirsty chief or some ignorant, good-for-nothing lout of a sultan. Thus, with his valedictory ode to the Imam, his *qasidah* on the first of Ramadhan, his rhymes on the sword, the palace, and the holiday umbrella of His Eminence (he was rhyming for a *jambiyah*, which was promised, but never given), he became a pest to his fellow traveller and captive.

I do not know how the Imam himself felt about it. Once, however, he sent back the letter of the poet, which accompanied the rhymes, with these words at the top in his own handwriting : *Allah preserve thee, thou hast done well*. He should have invoked the protection of Allah

especially for myself. But I had, in self-defence, put a few ideas into the poet's head, and the result was a few quatrains to the *sagiah*-camel, a dozen rhymes to the Queen of Sheba, and another dozen to the cannon of Ramadhan. The divagation was a success, and I was led to suggest a full-length *qasidah* upon the Great Dope Ghat. 'But you must attack it,' I said, 'for you have done enough praising in this land.'

Now, Constantine's facility in rhyming is only exceeded by his indiscretion. After he had finished his attack, in fierce phrase and burning rhyme, on the Demon Ghat, he sent the *qasidah* to the Imam with a note saying: 'If any of the bards of San'a wish to reply, they must hasten to do so ere the poet leaves the country.' The challenge resulted in a poetic contest—a great Ramadhan diversion—and every poet, every rhymers was busy defending and praising the *ghat*—the god—of Al-Yaman. Two or three replies were received every day through official sources or by messengers direct. One poet sent his long *qasidah* with his grandson, a youth of twenty or more; another came in person with his precious rhymes.

But there was a harsh note in this *ghat*-glorifying orchestra. One poet threatened to put his dagger in the heart of the vile Nisrani (Christian), 'who not only attacked the most cherished boon that Allah, in his mercy, chose to bestow upon his slaves in Al-Yaman, but made so many mistakes, which a beginner in the craft of prosody would have avoided. As, for instance, rhyming *ghat* with *witwot* (bat), and giving "emerald" a foot instead of a foot and a half, and confusing often the subjective with the objective mood in his trailing and ailing diction.' Fortunately, this would-be assassin of a child of the Muse was not allowed to pass through the gate; and comrade Constantine ceased to rhyme, occupying himself awhile in copying the eighth volume of the *IKLIL*.

But the crowning glory of the contest was the poem we

received from the Imam himself, written in purple ink, in his own hand, and sanded with red sand. It was the poem which Hasan ibn Ali was the first to announce, and the subject of which he would not first reveal. What amazed me was not the poem itself, but the fact that the Imam Yahya, even in the blessed month of Ramadhan, when the working hours are reduced by the fast to a few only, could find time to write a long *qasidah* in defence of *ghat*. He enumerated but ten of its virtues, one of which is that it kept him awake and he was, therefore, able to defend it in measured phrase. He is very gracious and very modest in his poetic manner. He refers to his effusions as 'the inventions of Yahya'; he honours Constantine by fitting his name—an outlandish name in Arabic, especially in the mouth of a Muslem—into one of his lines, and the closing rhymes, together with the note, reveal the good breeding of a descendant of a hundred imams, most of whom were warriors and poets, as well as the fine humanity, the intimate touch, which makes even the Zaidi and the Nisrani kin.

' Thus veiled with shame I send to thee  
A daughter of these spicy climes ;  
With not a pearl around her neck,  
But only a string of common rhymes.'

Also the following note :

' This is the best we could do in the midst of  
so much business and so many cares.'

Y.

No ruler in the world can be a more gracious poet, and no poet can be a more practical and powerful ruler. It is doubtful, however, if in these prosaic times such men exist outside of Arabia.

But one man in San'a disapproved of the Imam, and that was Hasan ibn Ali, who came in one day scowling, contrary to his wont, and forgot to doff his sandals at the



door. 'Mowlana the Imam has set a bad example—by Allah ! a very bad example. For as soon as San'a knew that he himself had entered into the arena to defend the *ghat*, everyone, even the *saqiah*-boy, began to sharpen his rusty steel. There is a tumult and confusion of rhyming in the city—worse than the confusion and tumult of the Day of Judgment. *Billah* ! even your own servant, whom I met going to the Souq, assailed me with a wicked rhyme. He called to me and cried :

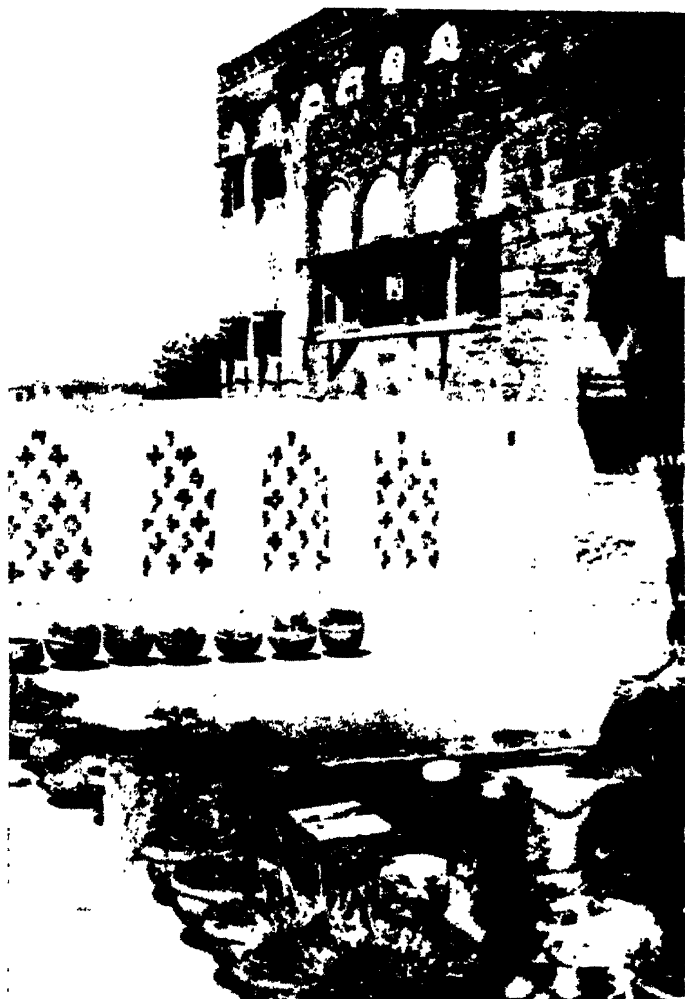
' " A bunch of *ghat* <sup>1</sup>  
And watch me trot." ' ,

And before I could lay a chastising hand upon him, he was in sooth trotting away. But that is not the worse of my ills this morning. It has reached me, O model of excellence, that your companion is copying the volume of the *IKLIL*, which I had much trouble in securing for you to read. Its owner will not sell it for all the gold treasures of the Imam, and he seldom lends it to anyone. Besides, your friend cannot write—forgive me—and anyone copying the pages of the *IKLIL* in such an execrable hand as his, should, at least, be paraded on a donkey in the city. Where is the book ?

I could not persuade Hasan to lay down his bag and have a cup of coffee. He was too angry even to talk business. For although he had promised the day before to bring me an ancient MS., written by a Muslem astronomer, entitled *The Marriage of the Stars*, and although he had the said MS. in his bag, he would not sell it—under the circumstances, he would not even show it to me. But he apologised, as he was saying salaam, for his unseemly manner—for 'the temper,' as he put it, 'that enricheth Iblis.'

As he was going out our servant Madani was returning from the city with a handkerchief in his hand containing

<sup>1</sup> Original : ' *Ghat, ya Hujri,  
Wa t'rani ijri.* '



A HOUSE OF THE BETTER SORT.  
With a Garden in the Inner Court.

To face page 212.



the silver change, which we needed for *bakhshish*. They met at the door, and Hasan ibn Ali, laying a chastising hand upon the boy : ' What is the difference between a donkey that brays and a donkey that runs ? Excrescence of the rhyme ! Thou shouldst be locked up in the vapour room of the *hammam* for three days.'

Madani, in breaking away from him, dropped the handkerchief, and the sound of silver at our door was responsible methinks for the following epistle, which I received the day before our departure. I translate it for the delectation of the reader, and as one of the many examples of the quaint ancient manner that still prevails in Arabia :

'To the Exalted Seat of Light of Learning and the Luminary of Wisdom, our Brother Ameen, ever in the Protection of Allah.

'It came to me that thou art going,  
O peerless one ; my tears are flowing  
For thy departure. Strange, how Fate  
The joining hearts will separate.  
If I had wings, I'd follow thee  
To Aden and beyond the sea.  
But they have clipt my wings and said :  
Here is a gun for thee instead.  
Oh, Time makes even the camel weep ;  
And the sun of love burns even the sheep  
Who's in the shadow of a rock ; but lo,  
I'm in the sun itself, and so,  
I crave thy shade of grace. Thou knowest what  
Refreshing virtues are in *ghat*.  
Call it *hashish*,  
But don't forget the *bakhshish*.

(Signed) The Owned, the Distracted,  
the Captive of thy Thought,  
'MUHSIN.'

The original, which I cherish, is written on the back of a communication of the Commander-in-Chief, in which

he directs Muhsin, who had recently joined the army as a *mujahid* (volunteer), to the arsenal for his cartridges and to the treasury for his six *bugchas* (five cents) a day. Dost thou blame him, O reader, if his Arab Muse turns to begging?

## CHAPTER XXI

### MISSIONS AND SUSPICIONS

HUSEIN HASAN, a Frenchman, who came to San'a a few years before us, by way of Mokha (no one, with honourable intentions or without, could come by way of Aden), swore in the name of Allah and the Prophet that he was a Muslem, that he desired to help the Imam, and that if he was placed at the head of the cartridge factory, he would make it doubly productive. 'Give me the formula for powder,' said the Prime Minister. The Frenchman Husein Hasan did so, and it was correct. He knew what he was talking about ; and for this reason he was a spy, and most dangerous.

The Imam ordered him sent to the Municipality, where he was lodged in a small room, at whose door were stationed two sentries. 'Three days after,' said the Chamberlain to me, 'he was shown the might and terror of the Imam. Five thousand soldiers passed through the street, beneath his window.' Husein Hasan's papers were then taken from him, and he was sent whence he came, his heavy turban, his broken Arabic and his 'Allah and the Prophet' to the contrary notwithstanding.

But the Frenchmen who arrived when we were there were genuine in name, and they came with servants, an interpreter, and presents ; came from Djebuti, by way of Mokha, too, on a commercial mission, it was said. No mission, however, whether commercial or scientific, could be absolutely free from politics in Al-Yaman ; particularly in those days when the Imam, bottled up as he was by the English, was willing to play any game that might help

to defeat their diplomacy of procrastination. He permitted the Frenchmen, therefore, to come to see him, but they were not received officially when they arrived. They were even detained at the gate of the city, although accompanied by six soldiers, until word came from the Palace to permit them to enter.

Had they known enough about Muslems and Muslem lands, one would think, they would not come to San'a to transact business in the month of Ramadhan. But intrigue and suspicion can fraternise to gain their respective ends ; and these Frenchmen were not as ignorant as I first thought. In a way, they even got ahead of us, for in the afternoon of their third day in San'a I saw them walking down Shararah Square with 'Gorgy' the munition man of the Imam. From which I made grave deductions. We had been in San'a twenty days and 'Gorgy' was not permitted to see us ; but these Frenchmen, on the third day of their arrival, are allowed to fraternise with him, and they walk arm-in-arm down the Square before our own eyes. I was first amused. A tall and a short Frenchman in helmets, and thick-set 'Gorgy' between them in a fez ; the trio seemed to have come out of Trilby and settled in San'a. But what has that to do with my deductions ?

This is what I want to say. The Imam trusted them, or simulated trust, in such a manner and at such a time that his other guests might see and later tell in Aden of what they had seen in San'a. The rumours in the city, moreover, were consistent with Imamic policy, and the Frenchmen themselves were sanguine. They had come before for the concession which they were now to get, and well might they sit in a corner of their little house, next to ours, and empty with 'Gorgy,' K.Y.R.F.G. (Knight of the Yahya Rapid Fire Gun), a couple of bottles of cognac. They had brought two cases of liquor with them, the servants said. Two cases of liquor in San'a, and in the blessed month of Ramadhan ! No wonder the

servants cried 'Pigs!' and carried drinking water for them from the dirty pool.

But what was the nature of the concession, and did they get it? England had closed Hudaidah to the Imam, and France, to spite England, and get in the bargain a few of the Imam's bags of gold, would open Mokha to the Yaman trade. A French company would rebuild that ancient port, buy all the coffee that the Yaman produces, and furnish the Imam with all the arms and ammunition he desires. The mere rumour of such a concession should induce in the British Government a better consideration of the Imam's interests and their own. It was, therefore, neither granted nor refused, and the French mission was sent away with an order for some telephone wires and a vague promise of ultimate fulfilment, *inshallah*.

Thus the British authorities in Aden were kept guessing. But one of them, who had been in authority and was subsequently free to praise the Imam in 'a letter to *The Times*' and protest against the stupid policy of the British Government in Al-Yaman, decided to go to San'a to right things and incidentally to talk concessions. This knight-errant of Al-Yaman, who tried once before to get to San'a, but failed, as I shall relate in a succeeding chapter, was permitted by his 'friend' the Imam to come. But when he arrived in the capital he was given the cold shoulder. For how should His Eminence know that this man had taken up the cudgels in his behalf? He himself says so? But he is of the Ingliz, and when he was in power at Aden his words and his acts were different. Ha, and he now comes for concessions! He was lodged and fed decently, of course; and several days after his arrival he was received by the Imam, who overwhelmed him with *inshallahs* and *mashallahs*. Another long wait; another audience, with more of the verbal mirages mentioned; and then a word that his presence in San'a could no longer be of any



possible use to himself or to the Yaman. All of which, in the even tenor of officialdom, was quite legitimate ; and our knight-errant, being once an official himself, accepted it with equanimity.

But it did not end well. For on the day of departure the muleteers who were to carry him and his companion and their luggage back to Aden demanded their pay in advance. For shame ! This is against all the rules of Arab hospitality, especially when an Ameer or an Imam is the host. The Colonel was afraid that the scoundrel muleteers were going to collect both from the Imam and himself. No : he was assured by them that the Imam will not pay. But he had reason to doubt their word ; reason, too, for the indignation which led him to go in person to see about the matter. He met the Imam walking amidst his entourage across Shararah Square, and he spoke to him in respectable Arabic. But His Eminence must have been in a bad mood, or he was not pleased with being thus approached in public by a foreigner. He was, therefore, abrupt and unkind. He dismissed the Colonel with one of those savage gestures, which we ourselves have known at our first audience.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the children who had gathered and were watching the scene put the crown upon the ignominy with an obscene rhyme. All of which could not affect the magnanimity of a knight-errant, who continued, nevertheless, to shake a lance in the London papers for the sake of the Imam.

Another mission also came to San'a a year or more after our visit ; but it was neither humoured as the French, nor insulted as the English. On the contrary, the two Americans, whose motives of business were free from every political entanglement or design, were treated with the utmost kindness and generosity. The Imam gave them permission to go wherever they pleased for exploration, to visit whomever they pleased, and he was willing in the end to give them a concession for the exploitation

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII.

of the mineral wealth of the country. But these American business men asked businesslike questions. The ex-Vali of Al-Yaman, Mahmoud Nadim Bey, whom they visited frequently, told me that they asked him : ' If the Imam dropped dead of a sudden or was assassinated, would the concession be recognised by his successor ? ' The ex-Vali said that he doubted it, because he did not know who the successor would be. This is the truth which the Imam, soon or late, will have to face and overcome. Suspicion may keep away the adventurers and opportunists who come in the guise of friendship ; distrust may defeat the political purpose of a coffee merchant or an engineer, but when the door of trust is opened those who deserve to enter turn back disappointed.

Is it because of what there is within—the wealth or the skeleton in the closet or both—that distrust is the rule ? That suspicion in the Imamdom reigns supreme ? To my own story, which I have faithfully set down, I must add that the Imam distrusted even my camera. I have said that he himself refuses to be photographed, but he permitted me to take pictures of the army on the Friday review, and on the following day he sent for copies. Alas ! His Eminence will have to wait till I return to Aden, where they will be developed. Even the travelled Saiyed Ahmad did not understand ; and he would not believe that, even if I knew how to develop pictures, I did not have the necessary material. The Imam was irritated. There was a Turkish doctor in the city who had, it was thought, the material for developing, and he was ordered to come to see me. I offered the roll of films in the presence of Saiyed Ahmad. But the doctor said that he had everything except the lantern for the dark room. The Imam was not convinced, and I was not allowed to take any more pictures.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE IMAM AT WORK

EVERY month of the year, except in Ramadhan, the drums beat at nine o'clock, the first cry of the guard is heard, and the bugle says 'Good-night.' The city is closed, and no one after this hour is allowed abroad unless he carries a lantern and satisfies the ever-yelling guards of his identity and purpose. But in the month of Ramadhan the city opens about this time in the evening, and official business is transacted from eight o'clock till two or three after midnight.

The Executive Government has several offices in Bir'ul-'Azab besides the one in which we were first received ; and although larger, they are not elaborately furnished. Nor is there much to move in changing the seat of the Imamdom from one to the other—even from one city to another as in the war with the Turks. No furniture, no desks, no chairs ; the secretaries sit cross-legged on cushions and write with the knee supporting the left hand, in which the paper is held. As for State documents, this being a Government without red tape, the archives are reduced to a portfolio which is carried under the arm of one of the secretaries.

When we went to take our leave of the Imam, he was in the diwan, which he reserves as a rule for Ramadhan. But the setting of the scene was almost the same. There were low cushions, with a raised section for the elders of the Zioud ; there were the secretaries, six in a row, all busy writing ; there were a few soldiers in the courtyard, two at the door, and two in the diwan seated on the floor, one attending to the seal, the other to the *ghat* ; there was

Saiyed Abdullah, the First Secretary, seated to the right of the Imam, and His Eminence reclining on the black mattress, with a wad of *ghat* in his mouth and a paper in his hand. Thus always, more or less elevated from the ground, was the throne of an Arab king. Hence, its name, *Ferash'ul-Mulk*, or Couch of State.

The Imam discards his sword, his *jambiyah*, and even his turban, during business hours. But he does not remain bareheaded; no Muslem ever does in public. The worthies of Al-Hijaz carry skull-caps inside their turbans for use at informal visits. The business cap of the Imam is of black, yellow striped cloth, which he wears tipped a trifle backward, thus showing to advantage a high forehead as pronounced in its arch as that of a babe.

The Imam received us as usual sitting, but with a smile and the cordial word, *marhaba* (welcome). He even gave me his hand to kiss, which is an Imamic favour, equal to saying: 'You are of us now, trusted and beloved.' I wondered whether the gesture had become automatic. True, he is both a civil and religious potentate, but I neither share his faith nor his principle of government. I may admire the latter because it is based, not on a principle, but on a personality.

There is much, after all, to admire in the personality of the Imam Yahya. He is practical and energetic, resolute and persistent, sagacious and far-sighted. Moreover, he is, of all the Arab rulers of to-day, the nearest to some system in conducting the affairs of State. He has the head of a man of business, and his one-man Government, with all its rusty gear, could not, under the circumstances, be run better by the president of an American corporation. But the most admirable thing about it is the rule, rigorously observed, of disposing each day of the business that comes to hand. There is no postponement, no procrastination, no delay.

When the diwan opens, a soldier comes in with a bag

which he empties on the carpet before the First Secretary; this heap of papers, rolled like cigarettes and cigars, is the mail, and Saiyed Abdullah, opening it, disposes of every letter or petition, according to its importance, by either giving it to one of the scribes direct, with a reply briefly noted upon it, or by laying it aside for the consideration of the Imam. But every letter written, no matter how unimportant, is placed before the Couch of State, and His Eminence, after reading it and adding a word at the end in his own hand (the date or his initial, a sign that he has passed it), gives it to the soldier before him, who applies to it the seal and then hands it to the addressing scribe.

Some of the Saiyeds, members of the Government, come into the diwan, make their salaams before the Couch of State with the necessary osculations, and participate in the general silence. The only one who is privileged to walk straight up to his seat, with but a nod perhaps to the Imamic Couch, is that beturbaned Yankee-Yamani, that bearded but mustacheless seignior, Sheikh'ul-Islam. He, too, had apparently come as a spectator only, but he occupied himself in turning the pages of a book in manuscript, without deigning to speak to or look at anyone. The only person that had a right to speak, it seemed, was the guard at the door, who often, from behind the scene, rudely shattered the globe of silence. 'The plague in thy liver! I told thee the Imam is busy now. . . . *Nahi* (very good), *nahi*. The reply is under seal. . . . The plague in thy soul! Stay where thou art. . . . Silence, Yahuda! Leprosy blind thee, silence! . . . Give him the *bunduq*, ya Aansy. . . . *Nahi*, on my head. . . .' Suddenly, this Cerberus appears in the door. 'Hasan ul-Herazi is waiting, ya Sidi.' 'Let him wait,' says the Imam. 'He says that he wants to return to-night.' 'Let him wait.' 'He says that the 'Amel . . .' The Imam loses patience and cries out, like the guard, and at him: 'Allah strike thee

in thy soul ! Get out.' I once thought that His Eminence was going to throw his inkwell at the churl.

Nor is the diwan without its specialists. Here is Saiyed Admad ul-Kibsy, who knows more about the Bedu, their intrepidity and stupidity and cupidity than any man in the Imamdom, and with a big wad of *ghat* in his cheek he approaches the Imam to whisper a word in his ear. There is Saiyed Muhammad Zabarah, the Ameer of the Palace Ghumdan and Superintendent of the Mint and the Jail, reading a petition two yards long, while 'Gorgy,' reeking with wine, is looking over his drawings of certain shells which cannot be made at his factory. The Imam calls him, and he hastens to genuflect before the Couch of State. 'How many do we need of this?' 'A thousand,' says His Eminence. 'And this?' 'Two thousand.' 'And this for the Mortar?' showing the drawings every time. 'Five hundred only.' The Imam, after writing something on the order, gives it to the soldier before him, who seals and sands it. He then takes the twigs of *ghat* which had been picked for him by the other attendant.

Enters a boy of about ten, with a stick in his hand, followed by two soldiers carrying a leather bag of silver. The boy delivers a 'cigarette' to the Imam, which he opens and reads. He then orders the two soldiers before him to count the money. They build it into piles—1,100 Marie Theresa dollars. The Imam, looking at the slip of paper: 'They should be one thousand one hundred and ninety.' The boy, who is the son of the 'Amel that sent this *zakat*-money, is questioned, and he speaks out. 'My father counted the money, ya Sidi, and tied the bag with his own hand, and it was only opened after that in the presence of the Imam.'

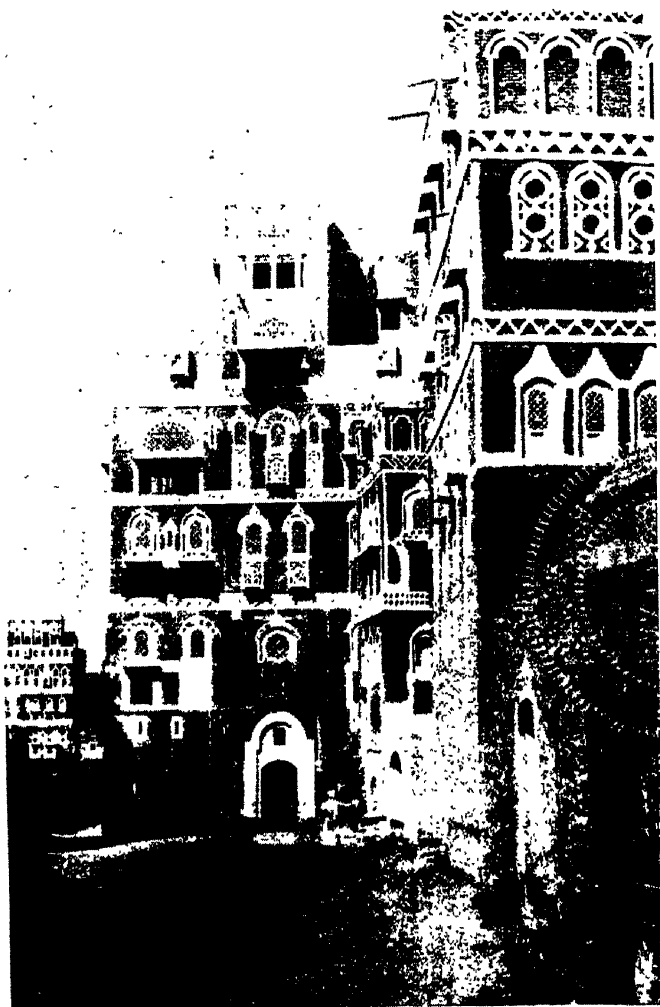
The soldiers, meanwhile, are recounting the money, which they find to be as stated in the note. The Imam has given the boy a *bakhshish* of 1 dollar, which he has taken and points to his soldiers, saying: 'I have two.' He

has received another dollar, therefore, which he has given to the other soldier, 'And this is for yourself,' said His Eminence. 'I have come to see the Imam,' says the boy, refusing the *bakhshish*, 'and that is all I desire.' The Imam is very pleased, and writes a line on a slip of paper, which he asks him to take to his father. 'Be thou favoured of Allah.' 'Allah give victory to the Imam,' replies the boy, and, taking up his stick, he walks out, followed by his soldiers, the proudest lad in the Imamdom.

About midnight, the telegraph clerk comes with a packet of telegrams, which are given precedence to the business in hand. An hour after, the flourish of the drum is heard, and as soon as the cannon is fired, a little later, the assistant secretaries, without asking permission, begin to sidle out one after the other. Their work is done. But the Imam and the First Secretary remain sometimes until the early dawn—until the work of the day, in fact, is entirely finished.

The economy in paper in the Imamdom reaches the sublime. Seldom one sees an envelope, seldom a full sheet of stationery—the scrap is the rule, and very rare is the exception. The first instance we had of this was at Ibb, when we received a telegram from the Ameer of Mawia written on the back of a tax coupon of the Dowlah. At Zamar, too, we received a message from the 'Amel of Ibb,' written on the back of a fragment of a petition presented to 'His Excellency the Kaimakam of Heraz.' Evidently the Imam Yahya, who won 'a wealth' (*khairat*) of guns and cannons from the Turks, turned their archives also into service. Books, coupons, petitions, documents of every sort, they have all been cut into scraps to be used in every department of the Government.

Only in foreign correspondence are envelopes and regular stationery used. But in the country, the Government itself has set the example—a Government without red tape, without pomp, without official affectation,



SAN'A, TYPICAL HOUSES OF THE HIGHEST CLASS.

To face page 224.





without luxuries. A messenger brings you 'a cigarette,' which you find is from the Imam, and in his own hand. After reading it, you tear off the blank portion, and write your reply upon it. Should you ever receive a communication in an envelope, you cut it up and use the inside part for correspondence, and should your correspondent be an intimate friend, and his message written on a slip as big as a visiting card, you write your answer in the blank space, though it be as small as a thumb-nail, and send it back to him. Waste is reprehensible ; extravagance is condemned.

This economy in paper teaches also an economy in words. Some of the petitions which the Imam receives from his subjects are not more than three or four lines. In one of these, which I have seen, the petitioner complains of his neighbour's donkey, who is always kicking against his wall at night, and the Imam orders that the donkey be chained from the hour of the first cannon till dawn. Some of the communications are even in verse.

The Chamberlain Saiyed Ali Zabarah, who was visiting us one day, lingered a while to overhaul his papers. He took out of his bosom pocket about twenty little rolls—cigarettes—and as many out of the folds of his turban, where he also sticks his fountain pen and his *araak* (tooth brush). He then began to separate the white portion from the written, and tear up the latter. One of these was the following :

' O Saiyed Ali, two *reals* I beg,  
And two *reals*, and two more in thy cheer,  
For butter, wheat and *ghat* in Ramadhan—  
Everything in Ramadhan is dear.'

The Arabs of one of the tribes of Al-Hijaz, between Wajh and Yambo', conduct their litigations in verse ; even the decisions are rhymed, but nothing, unfortunately, is preserved. Like the people of Al-Yaman,

they are not fond of keeping records. One of the papers which Saiyed Ali showed me was a line from the Imam ordering him to pay 200 *reals* to a certain Government official. 'Are you going to destroy this too?' I asked. 'If I pay two thousand *reals*,' he said, as he tore it up, 'no one will question.' 'But the Imam is likely to forget, and he will ask you to produce the order.' 'He forgets not,' the Chamberlain replied, 'and he questions not.' 'And does not the Government keep any records at all?' Saiyed Ali looked at me, while still destroying his own private and public documents, and said: 'There is very little worth keeping.' A soldier then came in with a message from the Imam, written on a scrap 3 inches square, and Saiyed Ali replied to it on a scrap not as big. His Eminence is laconic, and his officials, if they want to rise in his favour, try to emulate him. The standard model is the thumb-nail note, with just enough blank space on the sides—the Imam is very fond of writing in circles—for the reply.

But the Arabs, in their communications, have always been brief and direct, and Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy, in spite of his associations with the Turks, lovers of bombast and grandiloquence, remains an Arab. Indeed, of all the Saiyeds of the diwan, he comes nearest to the Imamic style. Here is, for example, one of his notes to me.

Blame not your friend. Everything will be ready to-night and you will leave on Monday, *inshallah*. I shall come at the seventh hour to-morrow.

This is quite Arabic in its brevity, but not in its truth. For nothing was ready that night; we did not leave on Monday; and he did not come to see us on the seventh or the twelfth hour of that morrow. But he did come on the following day, reeking as usual with perfume, chewing as usual the *ghat*, and complaining as usual of headaches, 'Nevertheless, ya Ameen, I am pleased, very much pleased; for the Imam has permitted me to invite you to

dinner. . . . To-morrow evening at my house, ya Ameen  
—to-morrow evening at my house, ya Ghustantine—  
salaam.'

Saying which, he trundled away sneezing, and praising  
Allah for the aspirin tablets.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE GREAT POLITICAL PROBLEM

HUDAIDAH is one of the big cities of Arabia and the chief port of Al-Yaman on the Red Sea. It had a population of 100,000, and was very prosperous in the days of the Turks, who used it as a base of supplies in their wars to subjugate the country ; and to further their military policy they had granted a French company a concession to build a railroad to Manakha and thence to San'a. But the Great War interrupted, destroyed everything—the concession, the prosperity of the city, and, finally, the sovereignty of the Turks.

During the war, however, Hudaidah was still in their hands, and the people of Al-Yaman, who fought them for forty years, chose at this time to remain neutral. The Imam Yahya maintained the ten-year treaty or truce he had made with Izzet Pasha and retired to Sharara, leaving the reins of power in the hands of Mahmoud Nadim Bey the Vali and Ali Said Pasha the Commander of the military forces. The country from Lahaj to San'a and from Luhaiyah on the Red Sea to Mokha—the upper as well as the lower Yaman—was under their control.

But when the Armistice was declared, the Government of Great Britain, in the name of the Allies, demanded the evacuation of the Lower Yaman, south and west. The army occupying Lahaj surrendered without fighting ; but Hudaidah held out and was, therefore, subjected to a bombardment from the sea. Soon after that the British soldiers were in occupation of the city.

About that time the Imam Yahya had come down to

San'a and was reinvested with power. Mahmoud Nadim Bey the Vali surrendered to him, and all the Yaman that was under the rule of the Turks, Hudaidah, of course, included, was *ipso facto* under the rule of the Imam. It was his right, therefore, to protest against the bombardment and the subsequent occupation. Which he did in a letter to the British Resident in Aden, who replied saying that British troops had entered Hudaidah to maintain peace and order and that the city would be turned over to him soon. This is the Imam's political proof in the argument; his legal proof is that he is the successor of Turkish sovereignty in Al-Yaman. There are other proofs also, historical and geographical, supporting his claim to Hudaidah.

But the English, in spite of their promise, turned the city over to the Idrisi, with whom they had entered into a treaty similar in its principal terms to those concluded with other Arab rulers during the war. 'We will supply you with arms and ammunition and money, and protect you from the sea, if you will help us to put the Turks out of Arabia,' said the British Government. 'We accept,' said their Highnesses and their Majesties of Arabia. Now here is the whole truth about their part of the contract. They were faithful to their pledges no doubt; they did fight against the Turks. But this was not the beginning and the end of their enterprise; every one of them had an enemy of his own race—a neighbouring ruler—whom he would first annihilate. Here, then, was his opportunity. Every time he struck a blow at the Turks he reserved of his resources and power to strike twice and thrice afterwards at his Arab enemy. Thus, King Husein used English guns and English gold against Ibn Sa'oud and failed. Thus, Ibn Sa'oud waged war against Ibn'ur-Rashid and triumphed. Thus, the Idrisi, even after the Armistice, and with the help of the English, continued to fight his enemy the Imam.

The English are not to blame if they prefer their ally,

in a political friendship, to the ruler who remained neutral ; they are not to blame for preferring the Idrisi to the Imam. Or Ibn Sa'oud to the Idrisi, for that matter, since preference is measured by power. But they cannot escape censure for pursuing, even after the Armistice, the same ill-fated policy that has the tendency of widening the breach between the various rulers of Arabia. Their treaty with the Idrisi was essentially a war measure ; an alliance against the Turks. But they continued, after the war, to supply the Idrisi with arms and ammunition to fight the Imam.

In a military sense they evacuated Hudaidah, which was immediately occupied, at their invitation, by the Idrisi troops. But they kept a Political Officer in the city, who was virtually an adviser to the Governor and the link between Aden and Jaizan. Thus, the evacuation was specious. Moreover, they had closed Hudaidah to the Upper Yaman, and the Imam's only outlet for trade was through their own port of Aden. It was an untenable situation. The Residency had broken its promise and, in parrying the protests of the Imam, was getting into a deep muddle. Colonel Jacob was at that time the Resident's First Assistant, and he knew that it is almost impossible to come to an understanding with an Arab ruler, except through direct negotiations. He decided, therefore, to go to San'a himself, and he convinced his Government of the necessity of sending a mission to the Imam. The permission *to come* to San'a was also granted. But Colonel Jacob with an assistant, a secretary, an interpreter, two doctors and twenty-five soldiers, beside the many servants and muleteers, started from Hudaidah on the 19th of August, 1919, without considering seriously the circumstances—I will not say the dangers—which were likely to prevent the mission from passing through Tihamah.

Now, in Tihamah, between Hudaidah and 'Ubal, are the Arabs of the Qohra who are powerful and brave, and who, being of the Shafi'i persuasion, do not like the

Zioud. Nor were they at that time friendly to the Imam Yahya. They were, moreover, hostile to the British, because they had bombarded Hudaidah, and here is a British mission passing through their land up to San'a, and carrying, it was said, beside the presents, an autograph letter from King George to the Imam.

But they arrived at Bajel, twenty-five miles inland, and stopped—by order of the Sheikh of the Qohra. 'You are our guests until you wish to return to Hudaidah.' Colonel Jacob, in his book, gives an account, true as far as it goes, of the captivity. But there are things which have escaped his comprehension. Sheikh Abu Hadi, for instance, is one of the sheikhs of the Qohra and was nominally at that time 'Amel of the Imam in Tihamah, but he did not have the influence among his tribe which both the Imam Yahya and Colonel Jacob thought he had. Or he deceived both of them and thus enabled his tribe to defeat their purpose of getting together.

The Imam sent 130 soldiers to meet the mission in Tihamah and accompany it to San'a. He then sent Mahmoud Nadim Bey with 4,000 Turkish pounds to secure its release. But the British Government offered as a ransom £50,000. 'I told the Sheiks,' writes Colonel Jacob, 'they would now be rich men. They shook their hands from holding the bribe, saying, "We want none of your filthy lucre."' <sup>1</sup> The Idrisi also intervened, but he was no more successful than the Imam.

The Qohras were inexorable. They wanted nothing of the English; they were not holding them captives for a ransom, and if they were willing to return whence they came the second week of their captivity they would have been permitted to do so.

But it took the British Government four months to decide about ordering the mission back. Meanwhile the captives were treated with kindness and provided with every available means of comfort, and when the negotia-

<sup>1</sup> *Kings of Arabia*, p. 214.



tions between the British Political Officer and the Delegation of the Qohra at Hudaidah were concluded they were released, every article of their confiscated property was returned to them,<sup>1</sup> and 2,000 of the armed Qohras escorted them back to Hudaidah.

The Imam Yahya and the Saiyeds of San'a were all amazed. Is it possible that an Arab tribe could defeat the purpose of the Government of Great Britain? Or is it not more likely that the Government has changed its purpose and its policy? Of a certainty they could overcome the Qohras if they wanted their mission to come to San'a. Thus argued the Imam.

He, therefore, changed his policy and resorted to the sword. His Army of the South was ordered to march on the Protectorates, which are a part of Al-Yaman—an inseparable part, the Saiyeds say. In this war move the Imam was a strategist of the traditional school. He struck at the enemy in the territory that was most convenient, to force him out of a territory that was beyond the reach of his arms. He invaded the Protectorates and conquered four of them, which he still holds, and the army, flushed by victory, cried, 'To Aden!' The cry had its effect, although the march of the Zioud was checked; it had its effect on the Colonial Office, which recalled the Resident and instructed the new incumbent to enter into peaceful negotiations with the Imam.

This was preceded with presents. Camels carried a Ford car to San'a, and horses and coffee were sent from San'a to the Resident-General. 'Exchange presents and goodwill,' says the Arabic proverb. The Imam also appointed the Qadi Abdullah'l-'Arashy to represent him in Aden. But a year, two years, three years passed, after the exchange of presents and goodwill, without any result

<sup>1</sup> 'Nothing was lacking, "Give us a receipt in full," they said, "for we cannot worship until full restitution has been acknowledged." I gave the acknowledgement at once. "But thou hast not counted the contents of the boxes." "Nor you when you took over," I replied.' Harold F. Jacob, *Kings of Arabia*, p. 225.

whatsoever. Even when I was there the Saiyeds were getting impatient. One of them, who is close to the Imam, said to me : ' The communications of the Resident are a chain of ambiguities and evasions, and we cannot find anything therein to indicate the purpose of the Ingliz. Even during the negotiations they continue to help the Idrisi. . . . Hudaidah is ours . . . the Protectorates are ours . . . any understanding that the Ingliz had with the Dowlah concerning them is no longer valid. We put the Turks out of Al-Yaman, and those who would take away from us the land of our ancestors we can also manage, by the help of Allah.'

But the Turks in Al-Yaman spent a little money paying stipends to the Saiyeds and the chiefs of the tribes. There is no harm, therefore, if someone else followed their example. Even Saiyed Ahmad'ul-Kibsy, who is most wary of the English, and who speaks for the needy Saiyeds, echoes the general complaint and regrets the days of the Dowlah, when the *zalat* was doled out, like wheat, by the bushel. I had always thought that of all the Arabs of the Peninsula, the people of Al-Yaman alone are free from any foreign influence and their hands are not tainted with foreign—English—gold. This is true, still true in deed, but not in thought, not in intention. They will maintain their independence, of a truth, but the seductions of *zalat* are more irresistible than the seductions of *ghat*.

So when we came to the great political question, an agreement or a treaty with the British Government, my last illusion was destroyed, for I was explicitly told that the Saiyeds and the Chiefs of Hashid and Bakil and everyone who received a stipend from the Turks expects to get the same, if not double the sum, from the English, if they enter into an agreement with the Imam. Is the Yaman any different in this respect than other parts of Arabia? The Bedu of Al-Hijaz—ignorance in arms—obey only their chiefs ; and their chiefs—cupidity in

arms—do nothing but ‘cash’ their following, their tribe. Of course, they all have to be satisfied—the big chiefs, the little chiefs and all the chiefs between—and they do nothing but carry a rifle and demand *flous* (money) which the ruler has to pay if he would remain on his throne. In Asir the same condition prevails, and the Idrisi has to pay. In the Lower Yaman, in the Nine Protectorates, the British Government has to pay directly to the dozen sultans around Aden. In the Upper Yaman the Dowlah paid a respectable sum to the Saiyeds and the Chiefs. But now. . . .

I have consented to lay the matter before the Resident at Aden, on condition that I express also my own opinion on the subject. I have told them at the Residency that their gold is ruining the Arabs, making them lazier, poorer, and more dependent, and that it is a shame, while realizing this, to continue to pay out stipends, no matter how small and no matter for what purpose.

The best policy that the British Government can pursue in Arabia to-day, and by virtue of which it can maintain almost exclusive relations with its people, is one based entirely upon a reciprocity of interests—a treaty of friendship and trade, without the ‘protection’ clause, without stipends, without political tags or linings of any kind. The Political Officer or Agent, for instance, should be replaced by a Consul, whose duties shall be strictly consular. The British Government does not know, perhaps, how much its Political Officers and Agents in Arabia are disliked—disliked on general principle. For a Political Officer means an Intelligence Officer, and in plain words, a spy.

Indeed, espionage is the weapon of British policy in Arabia, and the Political Officer or Agent, in his report, encompasses every subject, overstepping all bounds, penetrating into the most sacred of social and family relations. Here is a common example. Let us suppose that the relations between His Majesty’s Government and

one of the rulers of Arabia are strained, and that they were not improved by ordinary negotiations. The secret reports will then be resorted to, and if that ruler has a rival among his relatives or a powerful opponent among his subjects, which is almost always the case, the Political Agent, who knows all his secrets, too, will approach him with a title or money, or both, and use him as a pawn in the succeeding negotiations.

Even with the Imam, their negotiations were more or less subject to these political tactics. For whenever the subject was mentioned, they asked about Hashid and Bakil. Here is the weak spot in the Imam's armour. Hashid and Bakil are the two most powerful, recalcitrant and mercenary tribes of Al-Yaman, and one of them, Hashid, is contiguous to Idrisi territory. Hence the opportunities for a Political Agent. What was done through these two tribes to bring pressure to bear upon the Imam—to keep him out of Hudaidah and make him yield to the will of the British Government—would not make a very brilliant page in the political annals of a nation. It must be even worse in the eyes of a British public that its Government, in spite of all the political tactics, has utterly failed. For the Imam has succeeded eventually in taking Hudaidah—his army entered the city in April, 1925—and he has entered into treaty relations with the Italian Government, and he still holds the conquered territories within the zone of the Protectorates.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED

CONSIDERING the foreign policy, in declaration and practice, of a European Government with colonial or mandatory interests in the world, or with an ambition for spheres of influence in the East, one is led to believe that it is directed by people with dual personalities. Indeed, I have often thought that there must be a Jekyll-and-Hyde both at the Quay d'Orsay, for instance, and Downing Street—a Dr. Jekyll rubbing his hands and smiling benignly to the other Dr. Jekyll, his contemporary, and a Mr. Hyde decocting poison to be used by the diplomatic and consular authorities abroad. Now, these worthies, who seldom leave each other alone, deal in sugar pills, to be sure, but the arsenic is always there. Take an instance. Dr. Jekyll of Downing Street sends a minister to Afghanistan; Dr. Jekyll of the Quay d'Orsay hastens to do the same, and when they get to Kabul they find that the spirit of Mr. Hyde is upon them. Or was it Mr. Hyde that sent them? In any case, the Ameer, to save himself at least, has to sequester their various laboratories. So, too, in Addis Abeba, so too in Jeddah, and so too will it be in Al-Yaman, if the Imam is not wiser even than the Amir of Afghanistan. For the rivalry of the Hydes, French, English and Italian, is most deadly, not so much to themselves and their own Governments, as to the countries which they would uplift and exploit. They are now all wooing Arabia, speaking the language of Dr. Jekyll, of course, each in his own way, but they have their laboratories with them, and they are ever mysteriously busy. Now, one Mr. Hyde is less

fiendish than two, and when he is alone there is likely to be more in him of Dr. Jekyll. He has no rivals to keep him always in the laboratory.

That is why, in discussing the subject with the Imam Yahya, I was in favour of a single Mr. Hyde for Al-Yaman, and I recommended the English gentleman. Why? Because in such political marriages—and Al-Yaman, as I have shown, cannot hold out for ever against matrimony—the English gentleman, even though more selfish and deliberate, is better than the Italian or the French. I will drop the metaphor.

It is a fact, to be readily observed and acknowledged by impartial students, that in a country where civil authority is still old-fashioned or defective, or subject to periodic upheavals, the diplomatic representatives in it are continuously engaged in a secret rivalry for favour and influence at the ruler's court, and it is invariably the Government to whom they are accredited that suffers the most. If the ruling Ameer, for instance, is beloved of his subjects, he will soon have an enemy among them, created by one of the diplomats who is not so favoured at the court as his contemporaries; the enemy will soon have a following, and the following will soon become a political party. The other diplomats, to keep in the race, will have to do likewise, and the result is two or three political parties, all working against the Ameer and against each other, to gratify the grudges of their leaders and serve the interests of the diplomats of foreign nations. The Imam was convinced. But the match I proposed still hangs, because the other two gentlemen are more sedulous, if not also more seductive.

The next question in the negotiations was the Idrisi in Asir. It will be remembered that the Frenchmen who came to San'a, when we were there, asked for a monopoly of the coffee trade. But the Imam was willing to sell them the stock in the Government Stores—the tithes—which amount to 50,000 bags a year, if they would supply

him with all the arms and ammunition he needs. Arms ! Nothing is more desired in Arabia, especially in Al-Yaman. And why ? Because, in the first place, what the Imam holds of Al-Yaman is, in his own words, a handful, while his dream of conquest includes the whole country down to Hadhramout ; and in the second place, he considers the Idrisi as an interloper, and he would put him out of Asir, out of Arabia. I said nothing when I heard the Saiyeds in San'a speak thus of the Idrisi, because I knew little or nothing at that time about him.

But when I travelled in Asir and spoke with *its* Saiyeds and Chiefs as well as with the people, I realised the mistake of my friends in the Upper Yaman. The Imam may be able to take Hudaidah—as he has done—but he could not put the Idrisi out of Asir. It was not to his interest, I was convinced. The question analysed resolved itself into three principal factors, namely, the English as a wedge between the Idrisi and the Imam ; the Shaf'i Muslims of Tihamah who would espouse the policy of the English, as they did that of the Turks, against the Zioud ; and the problem, at that time, of Hudaidah.

But the Idrisi was willing to make peace, on condition that his boundaries in the north and in the mountains east were satisfactorily defined ; and the English, who were getting tired of the Idrisi, because, after discontinuing his stipend, he became too querulous, approved of the peace overtures in the hope of keeping an old friend and gaining a new one, while the Shaf'is of Tihamah, having suffered so much from the wars between the two countries, Asir and the Upper Yaman, were fed up with the two Imams and were ready to accept the lesser evil.

Manifestly then, the situation was ripe for peace, and the quickest and most practical way to peace was a conference. I therefore telegraphed to San'a, stating

the facts as they appeared to me, and proposing a conference to be held either in Hudaidah or in Aden. But the reply was the same as what I had always heard in San'a : the Idrisi has no right in any part of Al-Yaman ; the English had no right, before or after the Turkish regime, in Hudaidah ; the conference is futile ; the remedy is all in Aden.

But Aden approved of the conference. The Resident, General Scott, sent a wireless to the Political Officer, in which he congratulated me on my return from San'a, and expressed his desire to discuss the situation with me. But I was unfortunately delayed in Hudaidah and Jaizan, and the little Kawasji boat that brought me to Aden met in the harbour the outgoing P. and O. steamer and two aeroplanes which were seeing it to the open sea. The Resident-General was on his way to London. I saw the Acting Resident, Major Barrett, however, and after a long conference with him, I sent to San'a, through 'Arashy, the Imam's Representative, the following telegram in cipher :

I am hopeful. They are in favour of peace and also of meeting your demands on certain conditions. They are willing to transfer Hudaidah to the Imam, if he and the Idrisi can come to terms. A conference to be held at Aden and to be attended by representatives of the Imam and the Idrisi and an official of the Residency, is, therefore, suggested. Will the Imam accept ? I have also met the Saiyed at Jaizan and I found him in favour of peace, on condition that he is acknowledged the ruler of Asir, and his northern and eastern boundaries are satisfactorily defined. Let me know if this is acceptable and I will get you an official word from the Residency concerning Hudaidah.

Aden, the 16th of Zi'l-Qo'dah, 1340 = 6th of July, 1922.

Two weeks from this date, while suffering from the heat and pestilential air of Aden for the sake of the Arabs,



I received through 'Arashy, who was then in Ta'iz, and from him by a *najjab* to Lahaj, and from Lahaj by a special messenger, the following reply :

We have conferred with the Imam. You know how much he esteems and likes you. But the Idrisi has no right, under any circumstances, in Al-Yaman, while our rights are indisputable. We like nothing so much as to see you succeed in your efforts, but there is no need of a conference, even though the English Government desires it. You can manage the whole affair. Peace is in the hand of the English Government. We shall urge upon our friend (the Imam) the question proposed by you of recognising the suzerainty of the Idrisi in Asir and the ceding of Hudaidah to us. Make the whole matter clear to the man in question (the Resident). Accept our love and esteem.

Anyone who desires to serve the Arabs, for the love of their black eyes, by establishing peace and good understanding between their ruling Ameer and Sultans and Kings, has to spend three years at least in the country, going up and down and back and forth from one capital to another, and he has to have three most essential things for the purpose, namely, enthusiasm, money and health. Now, I was fast losing two of these essentials, and I could not with enthusiasm alone continue my travels. I decided, therefore, to leave the Yaman entirely in the hands of the Imam, but before my departure from Aden, I sent another communication to San'a, in which I emphasised the idea which was beginning to take root in their jingoish policy, and from which I quote the following :

The question is solvable to your satisfaction on condition of peace between you and the Idrisi. It is useless to try to put the man out of the country. Your claim to Hudaidah is supported with irrefutable proofs, and everyone who knows the truth about the matter will support you in it. But your attitude

towards the Idrisi is neither wise nor just. No one will approve of it, and you cannot but hurt yourselves in persisting in it.

What followed during the five succeeding years is significant. For the Idrisi, who lost Hudaidah and Luhaiyah to the Imam in 1925, signed a year later a treaty with Ibn Sa'oud, similar to the treaties between the Sultans of the Protectorates and the British Government—sans stipends—and he is still safe in his place—or what remains of his State is still safe—between the two strong men of Arabia, the Man of Mecca and the Man of San'a, who deem it necessary perhaps to maintain Asir as a buffer state.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE ROOF OF THE 'YAMAN

A MAN of generosity, who cannot accord a favour asked, will not resort to a promise, and if he can, he will do so, without saying much about it. This man, if he is a Government official, will not say 'No' after he had said 'Yes,' nor 'Yes' after he had said 'No,' and when he nods, he does so with a smile, and meets your wish with a goodwill. He is then a perfect gentleman. In England and in the Government of England such a man one meets everywhere, but outside of the British Isles, especially in the Orient, he is like an oasis in a desert. The more so is he appreciated—hailed with a hope renewed.

It was my good fortune to come upon a few of these oases in my travels, and one at the Residency in Aden was particularly refreshing. I say 'in Aden,' despite all the obstacles I there met with. My plan, after seeing the Imam in San'a, was to go down to Hudaidah and then visit the Idrisi in Jaizan. But the Imam and the Idrisi were at war, and the British authorities, who tried to dissuade me from travelling in the Upper Yaman, could prevent me from entering a country whose ruler was their ally and whose principal city, Hudaidah, was then in their hand. But when I asked the First Assistant, Major Reilly, after permission to go to San'a was granted, to give me a word of introduction to the Political Officer at Hudaidah, he said with astonishing kindness: 'He is now in Aden and I will ask him to visit you.' Which he did. Thus, through him I met another gentleman,

Dr. Muhammad Fadl'ud-Din, a Muslem of India with an Oriental soul and a mixed mentality, who was then the Political Officer at Hudaidah for the Government of Great Britain.

An oasis, indeed. How often, on our way to San'a, I thanked Allah for it. Otherwise, I might have had to return on the same road, which I dreaded, not because of its hardships and trials only, but because I would be deprived of seeing more of the country and its people. But once in San'a I thought the Imam would not allow us to cross the border to enemy territory, and the road back to Aden stretched before me a veritable *via doloris*. One of the Saiyeds even added to our woe. 'There is actual danger in crossing the border between Hujjailah and Bajil,' he said, 'and if you escape death, you will not escape captivity. The Idrisi distrusts anyone coming into his country from the Imam.'

But the Imam was good enough to allow me to send a letter to Dr. Fadl'ud-Din, through the 'Amel of Heraz in Manakhah and the Commander of the Idrisi Forces in Bajel, and he assured us that the journey, if we received a favourable reply, would be safe.

No better school for patience will a traveller find outside of Arabia. We waited ten days for a reply from Hudaidah, ten mortal days, and then—courage and fortitude for a backward march! Some painful experiences lose much of their effect through repetition, but a back-breaking and soul-troubling journey, if it has to be made a second time, can only be seen through the magnifying glass of the imagination. On the other hand, we were consoled with the fact that there was actual danger in crossing the border. But one day, when I was thinking what to say to Mowlay the Ameer of Mawia, who asked me: 'Art thou a Hasani or a Husaini?' and discovered afterwards that I am a Christian, and how to greet the old Faqih of Yarim who got his hostages together and taught them to sing:

'Victory to the Muslemin and long life to the apostle of peace, Ameen'—while I was thinking hard how to parry their questionings, a soldier entered and offered me three rolled-up scraps of paper, three 'cigarettes,' saying: 'From the Imam.' The first one I opened read as follows:

### In the Name of Allah

Mowlay the learned Qadi Abdullah ibn'ul-Hasan ul-'Amri, protected of Allah. Peace upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah, and upon the Prophet and his Companions and his Followers, the peace of Allah, and Allah preserve the Lord of Bounties (the Imam) and prolong his days. Amen.

I stopped for breath, and then said to the soldier: 'These messages are not for me.' But he swore by the head of the Imam that they were. I read, therefore, further:

Written to salaam and say that the address is in our name, but the communication is for Rihani, as you will see. Be you ever in the protection of Allah.

10th of Ramadhan, 1340.

(Signed) 'Amel of Heraz, ALI'L-AKWA'.

In a postscript, Allah is again invoked to give him and the Qadi all the benefits of the blessed month of Ramadhan—and we take refuge in Allah from the fire (of hell).

### Second 'Cigarette'

In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the  
Compassionate

To the worthy one, the highly esteemed Ameen Rihani, Allah keep him.

Salaam and respect. Your letter to Dr. Fadl'ud-Din was received and communicated to him by telegraph. The enclosed is the reply. If you will inform us of your arrival at Manakhah, we will instruct

our representative at Hujjailah to furnish you with an escort to Bajel.

7th of Ramadhan, 1340.

(Signed) Commander of the Idrisi Forces,  
MUHAMMAD TAHIR RADHWAN.

Third 'Cigarette'

Hudaidah—833.

7/8/40.

To our Friend Ameen Rihani :

Allah greet you and protect you. We are very glad to know that you are coming. Most welcome. When your telegraph was received, we sent to the Commander of the Idrisi Forces at Bajel, Sheikh Muhammad Taher Radhwan the necessary instructions. We soon shall see you in the best of conditions, *inshallah*.

(Signed) MUHAMMAD FADL'UD-DIN.

Allah be praised ! The situation was much relieved. The reader, who has accompanied us so far, will not misjudge, I hope, the anxiety shown on our part, and the interest anticipated on his, in what seems a trivial matter, for he knows of the trials and sufferings to which we have been subject in our travels, and he will agree with us that in a country like Arabia nothing is too small to upset a traveller's plans. Again, therefore, we praise Allah for an hour of the tenth day of Ramadhan, which dispersed the heavy clouds of Mawia and Yarim from our horizon and opened the way to Hudaidah. Thus, too, was the mind clear to continue the negotiations. We then asked the Imam for permission to leave, and in his farewell words, he was very gracious and kind. 'We have not been able to entertain you properly in the month of Ramadhan,' he said, 'and we wish you would remain till the grape season (July). . . . Constantine, you will, perhaps, return to us ; but the Ustaz Ameen will travel in other parts of Arabia and forget us. . . . Be not hard upon us in comparisons, ya Ameen.'

He then instructed Saiyed Ali Zabarrah to arrange for

our mounts and needs, citing even details, and among the documents that were brought to me the morning of the following day by Saiyed Ahmad ul-Kibsy were two very pleasant surprises, namely, an order for two bags, 50 lb. each, of the best coffee to be delivered to us by the 'Amel of Manakhah, and a letter from the Imam couched in the most friendly terms, to the American Consul at Aden. There, too, was my passport bearing the Imamic seal in red, and viséed by the Imam himself as follows : ' In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. No objection to the Ustaz Ameen Rihani travelling to Hudaidah. 13th of Ramadhan, 1340. Y.'

We were supposed to leave at the firing of the *imsak* cannon, that is in the early dawn, but nothing was ready till sunrise, and then, to prove his zeal in attending to every detail of the caravan, Saiyed Ali made one of the muleteers go back to the city for a missing stirrup. It was, therefore, another hour before he and Saiyed Ahmad and other friends said good-bye to us outside the city wall, beyond the Ghetto.

Westward the caravan moved, passing through a plain sparsely cultivated—its patches of green are like tattoos on the face of the earth, the Arab poet would say, and after an hour's ride, we struck a carriage road, at the foot of Mt. 'Usor, not far from the village to our right that bears its name. This road, which was built by the Turks, utters a hundred protests against their makeshift methods, as well as against the negligence of the Imam's Government. It is fast reverting to a mountain path obstructed in many places by crumbling walls and fallen boulders. This is the road which once connected Hudaidah with the capital of the Zioud—a military road to bring the ravages of war and not the fruits of peace and commerce to the country. But it has itself succumbed to the agencies of destruction.

From the last turn of the road, as we ascend the mountain, we get a view of San'a through a diaphenous veil of

haze and light woven by the morning sun, which was still lingering over the barrenness of Mt. Luqom. There, revealed through the veil, in contemplative charm, is one of the most ancient cities of the world, which has withstood all the vicissitudes of Time, which has triumphed over Time. Its various civilizations, its religions, its traditions have all been subject to age, but not to change. The spirit of the Sabians, the culture of the Persians, the barbaric grandeur of the Abyssinians still live in its very stones, move through its streets, and penetrate to the innermost mood and thought of its present inhabitants. Indeed, although Al-Yaman is the cradle of the Arab race, its history is a collaboration, and its genius is a mosaic. A last view of San'a—and shall it be the last?

‘The eye would linger still, and when thou art  
Beyond the view, there is a lingering heart.’

Behold, the first—or is it the last—daisy of spring. At this height in the north there is neither the first, however, nor the last. We are now 1,000 feet above San'a, and more than 9,000 above the sea. But we have not yet reached the roof of the Yaman. Mt. Sh'aib, which is the highest in the north after Shibam, looms in the distance beyond and will continue to beckon as we ascend. Meanwhile we traverse a plain, passing a few villages, one of which, to our right, has a Jewish name, Beit Ezra, and in the centre of this plain is Matneh, which is four and a half hours from San'a.

Matneh to the Turkish soldier of Al-Yaman is a name to conjure with. Matneh is the last station in the mortal march from Hudaïdah up to the Capital; and when the ragged and haggard battalions of the *mujahidin*—driven to the *jihad*—or those of them that survived the march, reached this spot, their cries of joy pierced the air. Four hours to San'a! *Padeshahem chok yasha!* Here they spent a day in jubilation—and spent plenty of *zalat*. The proprietor of the *samsarah* (inn) still smacks his lips



and shakes his head ruefully, when he thinks of the past. Allah ! The hut with a fallen roof to which he pointed was a palace in those days. . . . And how many of the fair Jewesses of San'a there lightened the hours of the *mujahidin* !

' The crumbling walls of joy,  
Where never lived a care—  
Where love was young and coy—  
They are, alas ! deserted by the fair.'

But the *samsarah* man and his dame, who was unconventionally, but not too attractively, visible, still serve the traveller a cup of the brew of coffee-husks. Our soldiers and muleteers here tarried, therefore, and seemed as happy as the Turkish soldiers in the old days, because—blessed are the contented !—they were travelling in Ramadhan and they did not have to fast. Come, then, thou libidenous Zaidi, unhusk thy humour—husks on the fire !—and stop snivelling. Our soldiers would moisten their lips. Quick with that most insipid of beverages, and here is *zalat* for thee.

The eyes of the old rascal gleamed and danced at the sight of silver, and he trundled back and forth carrying coffee pots and cups and, at the same time, pitchforking his dame with words unprintable. ' The Pasha,' thinking me a Turk, ' we cannot serve, *awwah* ! ' in a manner befitting his rank. The Imam, *awwah* ! is the enemy of *keif*.'

' The crumbling walls of joy,  
They are, *awwah* ! deserted by the fair.'

The Prophet of Arabia was the most tolerant of men, and his immunities more than balance his injunctions. This of Ramadhan, for instance, which the Muslim traveller always welcomes<sup>1</sup> ; and some of them travel to escape the fast. On the other hand, there are the

<sup>1</sup> ' A certain number of days shall ye fast : but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey shall fast an equal number of other days.' Al-Koran, Chapter II., p. 21 (Sale's Translation).

inexorably pious who would not avail themselves of the immunity of the Prophet. We had one such with us, and he happened to be our guide. Now the traditional mount of a guide is the donkey, and his traditional place is at the head of the *qafilah*, but our guide, who was always hungry, and consequently always sleepy, was only half-traditional. His donkey, while he dozed on its back, crawled like a snail behind us. His name—the guide's, not the donkey's—was Hamdan, and I tried to urge him forth with a rhyme. 'Hamdan, thou sleepy man, guide us forward and not backward.' But he was not to be seen after that even at the tail-end of the caravan; and Hezam, who would not part from me—he shed a tear of protest when his name was not first mentioned among the escort—would amble back and soon return driving the donkey with the butt-end of his *bundug* before him, while Hamdan the pious would continue to mumble half-asleep: 'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. I take refuge in Allah from the Devil . . . in Allah . . . the Devil . . .'

Peace upon thee, O Hamdan, we are at Bow'an. A miserable row of shelters and a stable called a *samsarah* in a low, shadeless and broiling spot, near an attractive bridge, built of red and white stone, is Bow'an. Here the carriage road ends or disappears in the wadi, but there are places where a complete break is evident. The Turks must have stopped in their road-building wherever they struck a snag. We ate our lunch at Bow'an and began the ascent of the mountain which gives its name to the place, as well as to the fort that crowns its summit. A very steep and dangerous ascent of more than an hour brings us to the altitude of Fort Bow'an, where the winds violently blow, announcing a sudden turn in the weather. Thus in six hours we pass through three seasons of the year: the flowers in the plain are those of spring, the heat in the wadi is that of summer, and in the winds on the top of Mt. Bow'an is neither summer nor spring. Closing

my eyes, the illusion of passing through Mt. Lebanon in the winter was complete.

On the top of Mt. Bow'an is a feature of rock structure that looks like the ruins of a temple—huge rocks and needles rising sheer to heaven, a massive wall all around, with an entrance on either side—a roofless temple on the roof of Al-Yaman. We enter through the San'a gate into this sanctuary where the wind did not intrude ; and after a few minutes, passing between pillars of a nameless architectural style, and cavities that look like niches, and jutting rocks above us like pieces of an amazing entablature, we come to its western gate—the gate of Manakhah—the gate that opens upon the terrible in distance and depth. Here is a panorama of peaks and wadis, which unfolds abruptly, dramatically, and before which one experiences, at first sight, what seems like a sudden stop in the blood circulation. You fetch a breath, you utter a cry, but for a moment you can neither breathe nor speak. The scene is essentially one of terror ; as if some demoniacal giant had taken a sledge hammer and smashed blindly right and left, leaving an overpowering, indescribable mass—a clutter of peaks and crags, a whirl of abysses, escarpments rising behind and above each other, and passes where a dozen Yaman peasants with *bunduqs* annihilated many a Turkish regiment. Nowhere before did I experience such a sensation of the inaccessible and forbidding ; nor have I ever beheld a mountain scene so vast, so wild, so barbaric. Here is a Switzerland which is depopulated, deforested, and—if I may say—dehydrated.

Standing at the top of Mt. Bow'an, Hezam pointed to a dark cloud in the shape of a saddle on the edge of the western horizon, and said : ' That is Manakhah—we shall be there to-morrow.' But one would think that the distance—the circles of this Inferno—could not be travelled in less than a week. Yet ' Man is a bird without wings,' says the Arabic proverb. He has also this

advantage over the birds : he can avoid the snags in the peaks on a cloudy day.

But the road, when we begin the descent from Bow'an, is a toboggan of slow torture, and often it would narrow to a path where nothing seemed secure but the rocks jutting above it. We walked down, of course, and the panorama at every turn revealed something new in its barbaric fascination. I had much trouble in keeping my eye upon it and watching my step. But we stood upon the apex of wonderment, above the petty considerations of safety and, one would think, even above the possibilities of other surprises. It was not so ; for the abyss often yawned, and beyond a series of abysses, soon after we leave Bow'an, the barbaric grandeur softens into pastoral beauty.

There, in a beautiful amphitheatre—a broad and deep slope of terraced and cultivated land—in the shadow of majestic summits, is the village of Haimeh, illustrating the truth that mountains separate, and oceans connect people. It was not more than a mile from us as the crow flies, but between us and it were abysses, deep and forbidding, and no visible road anywhere around it to relieve its isolation. This is not, however, its greatest surprise.

What struck me when I first saw Haimeh was its skyline, which suggested that of lower Manhattan. The houses, which occupy but small areas compared to their height, are built very close to each other and rise like square towers one above the other, four, five and six stories high. Another surprise about Haimeh is its division into three-quarters, which are separated from each other, but similarly built. The reason for both the separation and the crowding is that the inhabitants, who are of different tribes, still nourish their ancient feuds ; and they live in separate quarters, out of rifle-shot from each other, and in houses built like fortresses, whose roofs can be used, in case of war, both for attack and defence. Three hostile tribes in a single town always

ready for battle, and they have time, nevertheless, to attend to the soil. In Haimeh the *'udain* (two sticks = coffee and *ghat*) are cultivated extensively.

At sunset we reached Soq'ul-Khamis, which is midway on the rocky slope, where we were received by the 'Amel and his staff at the Government House ; but after a most trying march of eleven hours, I desired nothing so much as an alcove to stretch myself in it for the night. Nothing of the sort. The 'Amel had slain a sheep for us, and after the supper he and the other worthies of the village—seldom does Allah send them 'such learned travellers'—came in 'for the benefit and pleasure,' as their elder put it, 'of conversation.' Two mortal hours of 'benefit and pleasure,' and then—to bed? Nothing of the kind.

Bear in mind that we were still in Ramadhan, and the *ghat*, in the night's business, was the next thing in order. We would certainly participate. No? Would we then permit them, by having their *ghat* in the room, to prolong 'the benefit and pleasure' of conversation? Comrade Constantine, who is as unmindful of other people's comfort as of his own, made favourable reply, and straightway the windows were closed and the servants came in with the *mada'ahs* and the *ghat*. Half an hour after, I walked out to escape asphyxiation, and when I returned, the doughty Constantine, Allah give him increase of health and strength, was entertaining the company with thrilling stories about aeroplanes. He was even sorry—I heard him say so in plain Arabic—when they got up to leave. It was too soon—only an hour past midnight. Nevertheless, and no doubt reluctantly, they retired to another room to continue their *ghat* sitting. Immediately I opened the windows, without any thought of avenging myself upon my companion. 'You want to kill me,' he cried ; but after a mild dispute—it takes two to make a quarrel, and I was dead—we agreed to close them and leave the door half-open. Now for an hour's sleep? But Ramadhan doth murder sleep. No sooner I had stretched

myself than the drum began to beat and our pious guide Hamdan, who persisted in fasting, and therefore kept awake to eat, gave orders, after doing so, to saddle the mules.

In a senescent moon, two hours before dawn, we resumed our march, descending from one slope to another and from one hill to the next, picking our way across ledges and down precipices, till we had reached, three hours after sunrise, the last circle in the inferno. From the top of Bow'an to Wadi Mafhaq, from the roof to the bottom floor of the Yaman in these parts, is a steep descent of about 4,000 feet. In the wadi we meet with semi-tropical vegetation ; the yellow and red spikes of the century plant and the candelabra of the cactus are particularly attractive and abounding. Here, too, we meet again the monkey ; and among the birds I recognized the hoopoe, the sparrow-hawk, and a little red-breast with a very long and beautifully spotted tail.

But no human habitations till we reach the *samsarah* of Al-'Ijz, a little beyond Mafhaq, where an unveiled woman in pyjamas fastened around the ankles, and with a once pretty face ravaged by smallpox, attended kindly to our needs. She drew water from the well for the mules, filled our bottles, and made a brew of coffee-husks, which she served with dignity and grace. Other women in pyjamas we have seen working in the fields, harvesting their lentils or beans, and most of them of a comeliness which, like this Samaritan's, had paid the tax to ignorance and disease. It is the will of Allah. The most pathetic instance is that of a girl who stopped to salaam ; her face was like a sieve, and half of her nose was gone—by the will of Allah. But such disfigurements the natives do not seem to notice or mind.

In the next *samsarah*, at the foot of Mt. Heraz, which we reached in the afternoon, one of the men who accompanied us from Matneh entertained us with a tale. The conversation, which had been started on the way, was

about women, and our fellow traveller, a man of genial humour, who was smoking a *mada'ah*, offered me the tube, saying : ' And what matters smallpox so long as the *faqih* is in good health ? This man,' he pointed to the sheikh, who had fallen asleep, ' has a wife like the woman you have seen—a comely face and a delectable tongue. He also has a daughter, whom the mother would teach to read and write. So, she brings a *faqih* into the house, but after a week of reading'—he struck his left fist with the palm of his right—' she fell into the trap. The *faqih* asked the mother to give him the girl in marriage, but the mother refused. He therefore emptied his *bunduq* in her breast. Head of the Imam ! ' ' Whose breast ? ' I asked. ' He killed the daughter, head of the Imam, and he is now in prison in San'a. This old sheikh—poor one, he should carry his shroud with him when travelling—went to the Imam to demand the blood of the *faqih*. But the relatives of the *faqih* want to pay the *diah* (blood money) instead.'

' And will the *diah* be accepted ? '

' If the *faqih* has also been teaching the mother,' he snapped his fingers and his eyes sparkled, ' there is no fear of losing his life. The *diah* will be accepted, head of the Imam, and he will be taken back to continue the reading. What say you, if this is her husband and she is like the woman you saw at Al'Ijz ? Will she not accept ? '

' But suppose she refused ? '

' An official, ya Effendi, can be bribed with a pound of raisins.'

His companion, the wood-carrier, assented. ' But in the days of the Dowlah, we used to bribe him with *zalat*. The Turks don't eat raisins.'

' You give of what you have. *Zalat* in those days was like raisins.'

The *samsarah* man put in an ' Aye, billah ! ' shaking his head ruefully, and his wife, peeping through the door, sighed, ' Bakhshish ! '

The story-teller continued. 'The *zalat* was carried by the Turks from Manakhah to Bow'an and from Bow'an to San'a in a great procession. I walked in it once and escaped, Allah be praised. A great procession, ya Effendi. Here is the man carrying the *zalat*, and there are soldiers ahead of him, and soldiers behind him, and soldiers to the left and to the right of him—two battalions of the Nezam, and the *zalat*-bearer in the midst of them like a bride going to her new home—while there, ya Effendi, behind Bow'an, the insurgents would be waiting for it. They attack it, they slay the Nezam, and they carry the *zalat* away.'

The wood-carrier, nodding wistfully : 'I worked for the Turks in those days, carried wood for them. They paid me two medjidies a camel-load. But my father and my brother and my cousins were there, behind Bow'an, with the insurgents. We all got *zalat* from the Turks.'

Their military roads, their cannons, their citadels, their *mujahidin* to the contrary notwithstanding. I do not think that any of the conquering armies of the world could ever subdue the people of the Upper Yaman.

At the foot of Mt. Heraz we begin the ascent of the *naghil* of Manakhah, and after two hours up a narrow, winding and rocky path, crumbling in places and making the edge of the line of safety a part of the dizzy precipice, we came within view of the city. But one cannot resist the temptation to look back and say good-bye to that cyclorama of torture between Manakhah and Bow'an. If a traveller, riding through it comfortably on a mule, is ever a prey to the terror of distance ruthlessly revealed, what should be the state of mind of a poor soldier, who has to trudge through it with 60 lb. on his back and a ton of cares in his breast ?

Yes, Al-Yaman is the grave of the Dowlah, and, strange as it may seem, the people of Al-Yaman still invoke upon the Dowlah the peace and mercy of Allah.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### TO THE BORDER

SET in the saddle on the summit of Mt. Heraz, exposed to the four winds, with a ribbon of clouds always floating around it, its houses cluttered around a commanding citadel, built by the Turks, behind which rises one of the mountain's peaks in tripple crags like the spires of a cathedral, Manakhah is equally picturesque and impregnable. It is 500 feet higher than San'a, 8,000 feet above the sea, and has a population of 6,000 souls, one-third of which are rifle-bearers. It is also modern, having been built in the days of the Turks, about fifty years ago, to give them a foothold in the Upper Yaman.

To-day, Manakhah is the capital of the Lewa of Heraz and the principal station for trade between Hudaidah and San'a. It has a telegraph and post office, and a small garrison, which is superfluous. For the city itself is a citadel protected on all sides by escarpments and deep abysses. No army coming from the west or from the east—from Hudaidah or San'a—could conquer Manakhah, unless its ammunition gives out. Even then, the besieged will resort to other resources of defence. Rolling boulders upon the enemy, as in the battle of Shaharah, has also proven to be a most formidable method of attack. No wonder then that the Imam exacts hostages of his governors. If the 'Amel of Heraz, for instance, should declare the freedom and independence of his 2,000 *bunduqs*, or make free use of the *zakat*-money, who could prevent him, except it be the love of a son held as a hostage by the wise and practical Imam?

In the evening, I visited the 'Amel Sheikh Ali'l-Akwa'

forms of Sh'aib and Bow'an ; in the west, the valley of Mawsanah extends northwardly to Mt. Hefash, and in a southerly direction to Mt. Milhan capped with clouds ; and in the north, the long summit of Mt. Tawilah casts its shadow as far eastward as the village of Haimeh. But immediately around us are views more striking. Outside the saddle to the north on the top of what is called Mt. Baihan, is the other section of Manakhah ; above the citadel, overshadowing it, is cathedral-peak, and around it nestles the village of Kahel. Some of the houses are built in the rocks, above each other, and only through glasses can they be distinguished. There are other peaks in which man has built his aerie for no other reason, it seems, than to be above and not under the firing guns of the citadel. Indeed, on every crag, when closely observed, man rivals the eagle and is a patient neighbour of the clouds. He does not, however, neglect the soil, and he is in these parts, by the testimony of the well cultivated terraces all around, more energetic than his fellow countrymen in the south.

With a new escort, furnished by Sheikh Ali, we resumed, on the morning of the second day, our march towards the sea. We began again the descent from one of the roofs of Al-Yaman to its lowest bottom floor this time, to Wadi Hajjam at the foot of Mt. Wisl. But it will be six hours—another toboggan of slow torture—before we get there. Immediately, as we pass out of the shadow of Mt. Heraz and its city Manakhah we behold to the left, rising abruptly, the peak of Mt. Misar, with the most amazing group of skyscrapers, rising above its summit, seeming a part of it ; the foundations of Al-Hijrah are slurred, as it were, in the rocks, and the town presents a striking picture of realistic and harmonious composition. Here are skyscrapers built by man on the top of a skyscraper of Nature.

Passing out of the immediate shadow of Shibam, we reach the panorama point and begin the descent of the

water for the mules. Once we cross Bow'an, we begin to feel the presence of woman in the world—woman, the helpmeet of man, but toiling like the devil. At this *samsarah*, where we had a drink of coffee-husks, I realized again the need of carrying your own coffee cup, as the Saiyeds do, as well as a sleeping bag, particularly the latter, if one has to sleep in any of the *samsarahs* of Al-Yaman. Even some of the soldiers carry sleeping bags, which they tie when they get into them, not around the neck as might be supposed, but from the inside above the head. Thus is a man all bagged up, and he re-breathes, while he sleeps, his own carbonic acid without suffocating. Nor does he get up in the morning showing any sign of his having been poisoned. These people, moreover, close all the windows and doors before they get into their sleeping bags. What say our doctors to that? Is it not wiser and healthier, if you have to sleep with ten persons in a room, to sequester yourself in this manner—to quarantine yourself in a bag? . . . Indeed, the sleeping bag ought to be introduced into the slums of New York and London.

The best bag, however, is the open air, and those who live in the mountains, whose heritage is the open air, ought not to sleep an hour within. That is what I was taught to say and believe. But I know not of a people who have a deadly fear of the cold as the Arabs of the Peninsula, and they feel it quicker and suffer more from it, to be sure, than those who live in the temperate zones. Tropic heat thins the blood, and even those who are inured to the cold, who are born in the shadow of snow-capped mountains, soon become like the natives on their first or second year in the tropics. My companion Constantine is an example. Often have we quarrelled about opening and closing the windows at night, and often, in my anger, was I unreasonable, even disagreeable. Silence and our own physical conditions would have made a better argument, for he who makes his room

to throw stones at us. Whereupon, one of the soldiers fired his *bunduq*, and the servant Madani, snatching the six-shooter from his master's bag, joined in the battle. But the enemy deployed his forces, and the stones were showered at us from different directions ; one hit our guide's donkey, another brushed the ear of my mule, a third struck Madani in the shoulder. The boy ran, howling like one of the enemy, and the mules, taking fright, ran after him. It was a rout, and Hamdan the sleepy man, who advised peace the first time Constantine fired his gun, gloated over it. 'Allah will confound the wicked,' he mumbled. 'What have the monkeys done? The innocent monkeys.'

'The father of the monkeys,' replied Madani, 'sat on the Prophet's red handkerchief, when the Prophet had wiped the perspiration from his face, and every right Muslem should shoot the monkeys on the red spot for that.'

'The monkey,' added one of the soldiers, 'is the Yahuda transformed.'

'Correct,' put in the *faqih*. 'The Yahud (Jews) once came to the board of the Prophet and cursed it after satisfying their hunger. That is why they were transformed into monkeys ; and a good Muslem will always give them some lead to eat.'

Hamdan was not convinced, or he pretended not to hear. 'What have the monkeys done?' he continued to mumble. 'Allah will confound the wicked.'

We were now safely out of the Wadi, and in the centre of the plain, barely visible on account of the mist, was the house of Sheikh Hamzah, the representative of both the Saiyed ul-Idrisi and the Imam Yahya. There we had to change our escort because the soldiers of the Imam were not permitted to cross the border.

We alighted under the straw shed in front of the house, and at the door was a little man with a sparkling eye and a deep voice, wearing nothing but a cloth around his

petroleum box—125 test, made in America—and using another as a desk.

‘Write,’ says the father to the son. ‘Take a piece of paper—that is too big, divide it in half—write—wait—don’t waste all that paper—you only need half of it.’ He made him divide half of the foolscap into four parts, three of which he preserved. ‘Write : “From Hamzah, servant of the Imam, Allah prolong his days, to the ‘Amel of Manakhah the Qadi Ali’l-Akwa’. Salaam. The travellers arrived safely and we shall have them escorted safely to ‘Ubal.’”

He folded the slip, rolled it into a cigarette, and gave it to the bearded one of our escort, saying, as he smiled for the first time : ‘He reads and writes, he is a *faqih*.’ He then rode out with us, at the head of his escort, to the foot of the knoll, and there he bid us Godspeed, smiling once more.

The number of the escort indicates, as a rule, the safety or the danger of the road. The Imam, having given us an exhibition of his army in the capital and on the way to it from Aden, and realizing the futility of an extensive military escort in the Imamdom, detailed but two soldiers to accompany us to Manakhah ; the ‘Amel of Manakhah gave us four, and Sheikh Hamzah, whose spirit of economy you have witnessed, made us realise, with a feeling of terror, the danger of crossing the border. His escort consisted of ten bronzed, half-naked rifle-bearers, commanded by a shrunk piece of anatomy with a little red beard, no moustaches, and a pair of sunken ashen eyes. He was the Sheikh of Hujjailah, before it was destroyed in battle, and he still rode his donkey in a proud and disdainful manner. He was more than Sheikh of Hujjailah, and Hamdan knew him well.

‘This man,’ said our guide, ‘was the greatest robber in these parts—had fifty *bunduqs* under his command, who held up the caravans. In the days of the Dowlah, no one dared to cross this land without his protection, head of

pause : ' One-third of it is from Allah.' Saying which, he whipped his donkey and steered away. I spurred my mule and followed.

' And the other two-thirds of the calamity ? ' I asked.

' One-third is from the Sadat,' he replied, whipping his donkey again and riding away from me. But I was curious to get at the whole matter.

' Forgive me, ya Sheikh,' I said, coming near him again. ' But who is responsible for the other third of your calamity ? '

He stopped his donkey this time and faced me, saying : ' The last third—perhaps the first—is from you.'

He thought I was a representative of the British Government.

the first to attract the attention of a traveller. Even in their walk they affect the feminine manner, and those who are yet beardless might well be taken for girls. Their costume consists of a loin cloth, usually of a plaited fabric that reaches to the knee, a white waistcoat, and a cartridge belt ; and in addition to *kohl* and perfume, which are in common use all over Arabia, they paint with *henna* both their hands and feet. But they are armed with daggers and rifles, and when the battle calls there is nothing effeminate about them.

At 'Ubal we also meet the woman of Arabia of the days of the Prophet, that is, the woman unveiled, and we realise that the ancient Arab poets did not exaggerate when they sang of 'the dusky comeliness of Beduin maids.' Standing in the doors of their straw huts, they greeted us and gazed in wonderment upon us. We were no less attracted, but we could not stop the caravan to satisfy the eye's hunger. Arriving at the hut which was assigned to us, however, we were met by one of these girls, who welcomed us, not too graciously, and went to make coffee. She was, I learned, the occupant of the hut, which, by order of the Sheikh, she had vacated for the night. In fact, she was our hostess, for she also prepared our supper, and when we further inquired about her we were told that she was married and divorced, and she hated men.

Our hut was besieged by a crowd of people, who were evidently much amused, but they soon were dispersed by two soldiers to make way for the Sheikh of the village who came to say salaam and welcome. He said more, however, and he was more than a sheikh ; not too often does one see a noble specimen of manhood walking abroad in a stage costume and speaking, although in the most natural manner, like one of the heroes of the drama. Tall and majestic in his robes, bearded and sworded and perfumed, his feet brilliant with henna, he gave me the feeling, as he doffed his sandals at the door, that I was

toil or a day's travel, nothing is more restful and soothing than a massage.

Knowing that we had to start again at night to get ahead of the Tihamah heat, I slept in my boots on a cot of woven rope, under a cover woven by the stars. But in Tihamah, after eleven hours of travel, one could sleep, without a cover, on the ground. The day's march from Manakhah to 'Ubal, although not the longest, was the most fatiguing of the three. From San'a the road to Aden is much longer, but much easier, than it is to Hudaidah. The incline is not so steep. Geometrically speaking, there is a difference of about 30 degrees in the two acute angles of the lines drawn from Aden and from 'Ubal to the Capital.

Two hours after midnight, when the sickle moon of Ramadhan was rising over Mt. Shibam, we resumed our march. A breeze had also risen to brace and refresh us as we moved across the plain and up a little hill, slowly and silently, in the meagre moonlight. We did not recognize each other, nor did any one seem inclined to speak. It was an hour for meditation and prayer. But soon it was spoiled by one of the men who must have been very fond of singing.

Besides, there was nothing in his voice to justify the performance, and when one is in a spiritual mood, the effect of even an old tune well sung can easily be imagined. The man was, of course, applauded, but I think I made my disapproval heard. Nevertheless, he continued to his heart's content, and when in the light of dawn I inquired about him, I was surprised and grieved. He was the man who gave me a massage. He rode a few miles out with us—an escort of honour—sang Syrian and Egyptian songs to entertain us, and, without saying a word about it, he returned to the village.

Thou unknown benefactor, thou noble and generous Arab! I did not see thy face when thy hands were ministering to my comfort; I did not see thee when thou



‘Spur thy mule, O Ameen.’ But Sheikh Ali, son of the Sheikh of ‘Ubal, who was telling me about the Arabs of Asir, was not distracted.

‘We are hard and dry like a stone,’ he continued ; ‘the hot sands cannot hurt our feet, the hot sun cannot hurt our heads. And the Turks, are they mightier than the sun—what can they do to a stone? Yonder——’ he snapped his fingers like the people of the Upper Yamañ, ‘near that village, in the shadow of that mountain, we dug trenches—we were ninety men only—and we fired our *bunduqs* on the soldiers of the Dowlah—they were 5,000 and had cannons—from the hour of dawn till the sun above our heads was like a ball of fire. Light of this day ! at noon exactly, we walked out of our trenches, ninety men, not one missing, and down to the battlefield, which was covered with the Turks who had eaten our lead and were silent forever. The others took to flight. It was a day of days. And what a booty ! A wealth of *bunduqs* and ammunition—cannons too. My men would take the *bunduqs* they found, conceal them back of the trenches, and come back to look for more. . . . The son of the Yaman is like a stone, hard and dry ; the hot sands cannot hurt his feet, the hot sun cannot hurt his head. . . . These are of my men,’ pointing to the soldiers ; ‘they walk and run, as you see them now, twelve hours a day, without tiring, without complaining. Yes, they complain of one thing, the clemency of the Saiyed (the Idrisi). They can beat the Zioud every time, and when they take them prisoners the Saiyed will not permit the slaughtering of them.’

From Bihāh, through the plain of Mathalah, we pass, in an hour, out of the shadow of the mountains, and on the edges of the horizon before us the dark cloud gradually reveals the outlines of the town of Bajel. On our way we see the women working in the fields with the men, and not only are they unveiled, but—surprise of surprises !—they wear hats, large straw hats similar to those worn by

they are supposed to cover their whole body. A few yards of cloth mostly striped are wound tightly around the waist and fastened in front, which make a split skirt that comes down to, but does not conceal, the heavy silver anklets, and those who have entered their teens wear also a red or yellow jacket that scarcely touches the top of the skirt, leaving a line of bare waist visible. Tall and slender, they, too, like the women, walk briskly, but with a mincing step, revealing coquettishly their leg up to the knee, when the wind does not do it for them, and they fetch and carry assiduously. They quarrel, too, with the boys, but when they do so, the charm that envelops them evaporates. They have a tongue of flame and filth.

The men that met us outside the town conducted us to a guest-house of many excellencies. The newly white-washed rooms, the furnished diwans, the beds with clean linen, like the servants themselves, evinced a taste that aspired to something even within the borders of civilization. Here, too, was a fellow-feeling and a spirit of tolerance which distinguished the Sunni Muslem from his brethren of the Shi'ah persuasion. Also a kitchen that boasted of a cook of the days of the gormandising Turk. After we had been furnished with a sumptuous breakfast, among which were fried eggs that suggested the *huevos flamings* of Andalusia, we were left to rest for the morning, and when we got up about noon, we found at the door two petroleum boxes, one filled with delicious black grapes, the other with bananas. Grapes in the month of May, when in San'a they are yet green and in Mt. Lebanon they are still in the flower. But everything ripens prematurely in Tihamah.

Sheikh Taher Radhwan the Commander-in-Chief and 'Amel of Bajel came to see us in the afternoon, and apologised for not coming earlier, because, after the night's business (Ramadhan again) he goes up to a little hill outside the town to sleep. He asked us questions

Idrisi army because they get more money. 'And when there is peace between the two Imams,' I asked him, 'what will you do?' 'I will go to Ibn Sa'oud,' he replied. 'There is always "a wealth" of war in the land of the Arabs.'

The business of the Government of Bajel is transacted in the evening on the roof, and most of the people who have houses of stone or of red brick spend the nights, more than half the year round, in those roofless enclosures on the housetops. Even then they do not escape the heat, for the sun leaves in its trail a flame to last till late after midnight. Those in the conical straw huts, which are so well built, would seem better off, but they, too, move their corded cots outside and sleep under the stars. There is little or no relief, however, till about four in the morning, when the mercy of Allah breathes upon the world, and man and beast are lulled to sleep. A few hours only, and the land is bathed in sunlight. Willy-nilly, one must rise, at least to move inside.

Up an azure sky, which is oppressive in its purity, the sun ascends and continues to pour its heat generously till noon, and then—it was 100° F. in the shade, the bottom had fallen out, the land was flooded with fire ! I looked out of the window, and the town of Bajel, which yesterday was so un-Oriental in its busyness and hurry, was smitten with a stupor that bordered on death. The donkeys in the square looked like statues or stuffed animals ; the few trees in the plain were but bits of landscape on canvas ; the red bricks of the houses were a brilliant amber in the glare ; and the few people that were out—a woman with a basket in her hand going to the store, a girl with a jar returning from the well, a man with his loin-cloth on his head, a soldier with his gun dragging on the ground, a blackamoor with just the loin-cloth cord tied under his dome-like ebony stomach—they all moved about in a listless, shambling gait, a wish-it-were-the-end-of-the-world feeling. Not a breath

simmom, but only a *ghowbah*, a hurricane. The water must cool in the jug—that is the only proof of a simoom !

From Bajel to Hudaidah is a distance of ten hours on a mule (twenty-five miles) or eight hours on a donkey, and when the choice is offered, the latter, even if he were slower, is preferred by the wise. For few are the mules that will walk fast, and few are those that trot without shaking the rider to exhaustion. The average mule will dance an ugly step, quick, hard, short, very trying, and when he is reined, he will fall back into a slow, dragging, languid pace. Whip the beast, and he will begin to dance, but decently, at a respectable speed, he will not. Even when he is of the choice few, he will have other qualities to damn him.

Our servant Madani, for instance, always chose a buckler for luck, or he made him a buckler on the first day of the journey. Sitting loosely but proudly on the top of the packs, with his stick always busy in front and behind, he cared little what became of his mule or himself. After the battle with the monkeys in Wadi Hajjam, once we were in the plain, the beast took the bit between his teeth, kicked in the air, and ran away, heading for nowhere, while Madani was turning a somersault on the ground. He cursed the mule and all his ancestors when he could speak, but the guide Hamdan, the pious and sleepy man, defended the beast. 'Madani wants to race,' he said, 'and the mule was obliging. Why didn't he stay on his back?' After a long dispute between our guide and our servant, we had to interfere, and it was decided that Hamdan should change mounts with Madani to prove the worth of the mule. He did ; and for once he was shaken out of his sleep to find himself alas, rolling head over heels in the dust. The horse-laugh from the direction of the donkey startled everyone. It was Madani in a jolly spell. No, it was not altogether his fault ; the beast would buck on the slightest provocation. On the whole, mules are most trying and are only

away every time I looked at it. A will-o'-the-wisp, I decided to let it alone. And it must have been fully two hours after we had first seen it when we dismounted, at 2.30 a.m., in front of the straw hut of At-Tanam.

Here we waited for what remained of the Ramadhan moon to appear, and then continued for three hours through a saline plane covered with grass and brush. The air had also changed ; it was crisp, and it smelt of the brine. We were nearing Hudaidah and the sea.

The sea ! That blue ribbon on the horizon before us, that gate on the coast of isolation, that cerulean road to country and home—to civilisation—back to the world of struggle and achievement. After San'a and Tihamah, nothing was more pleasing to behold, nothing was more welcome, than the sea.



Acc. No.	9312
Class No.	G. 4.
Book No.	16